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THE GOLDEN CROWN

BOUNDS
OF THE SHIP

GOLD



OR, THE TERRORS OF THE ARCTIC REGIONS.

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THE
LITERARY



THE FROZEN CREW

GO BOUND TO THE SHIP

GOLD



THE
FROZEN CREW

OF THE
ICE-BOUND SHIP;

OR,

THE TERRORS OF THE ARCTIC REGIONS.

A ROMANCE OF THE WILD AND WONDERFUL.

With Illustrations.

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THE FROZEN GROUND OF THE ICE-BOUND SHIP



CHAPTER I.

THE PIRATE SCHOONER.—THE FLYING DUTCHMAN.

On the bosom of the broad Atlantic there floated,

motionless as death, a vessel whose proportions would have called forth the wonder and admiration of any seaman, had she been anchored in any port of the busy world.

Her elegant tapering spars, and beautiful lines, made her appear as some created being ordained to be received by the ocean, and the handiwork, not of man, but of the Deity himself.

But, alas, this beautiful model and specimen of human skill, was fashioned at the altar of avarice, for the aid of oppression, injustice, and savage cruelty.

She had once been a slave, she was now the renowned and dread pirate schooner, "E Malachor," or the evil one.

Every vessel of war that ploughed the deep had received orders with respect to this ship, ever successful in her career of crime.

Every merchantman and trader shuddered at the mention of her very name, and the reported atrocities practised by her desperate and daring crew.

She had sailed far and wide o'er the rolling waters, and left in her track marks only of bloodshed, rapine, and murder.

Let us now go on board the rover's ship, as she lays in a sea calm and smooth as a mirror, and the sun pouring down on her low sides a withering flood of light and heat.

Fore and aft are awnings spread to protect the crew from the powerful rays that swept the glassy surface around them; her ropes are hauled taut, and, at all points, she wears the appearance of being under strict discipline and the control of good seamanship.

Her breadth of beam is enormous, and those spars, which appeared so light in the distance, are of unexpected dimensions.

Her decks are of narrow fir planks, her ropes of Manila hemp, nealy secured or coiled down to a deck of exemplary whiteness, while her capstan and binnacles are cased in fluted mahogany and brass.

In front of the mainmast, and around the main boom, may be seen piles of muskets intermingled with boarding pikes, carefully arranged, and tipifying some sea-bird about to dart upon its prey.

In the centre of the vessel, between the fore and mainmast, there is a long 32-pounder, fixed upon a carriage revolving in a circle, while eight guns of smaller calibre, but exquisite workmanship, are mounted on each side of her decks.

Having viewed the ship, let us now turn our attention to her captain and crew, and marvel at the possibility of one man uniting in bonds of fellowship a band of desperadoes, who held in equal contempt the laws of God and man. It is because he who commanded could find no rival in active fortitude, and was himself superior to all on board in iniquity. Possessing greater talent, knowledge and courage than any of his followers, he was enabled to rule them with a rod of iron, and awe them into obedience of his will.

What had been the early life of this adventurer was disclosed only to a very few who were strictly in his confidence.

It was undoubted that he had received an excellent education, and the rumour went abroad that he was a native of Selkirk in Scotland, but, emigrating from that country, had entered the American service, where his gallant services had conferred on him honours more to be coveted than those he now bore.

By what chances he had become a pirate—by what errors he had fallen from his station in society, had never been revealed. It was generally suspected that he had been some years employed in slave traffic previous to his seizing the "El Malachor," and commencing his daring and reckless career.

The name by which he was known to the crew of the pirate vessel was Paul Jones, an appellation chosen by him to carry out some secret purpose.

In person he was above six feet high, and possessing such physical strength that with a blow of his fist he could fell an ox.

His features were handsome, but partially disfigured

by a cicatrice, the result of a deep wound in one of his numerous engagements.

His mouth, well formed, and garnished with extremely white teeth, was covered by a profusion of beard and moustache, a fashion followed by every person composing his crew, who suffered their hair, invariably, to usurp the lower part of the face. The proportions of the body of the renowned buccaneer were perfect, and from their vastness they became almost terrific.

His costume was elegant, and well adapted to his form, being that of a Russian naval uniform, elaborately embroidered with gold lace and feathers; a pair of pistols and a long knife in his sash completed his attire.

The crew of Paul Jones consisted in all of one hundred and sixty-five men; but it was to be remarked that all those in authority were either Englishmen, or from the more northern climates, the others consisting of Brazilians, Americans, Portuguese, Creoles and Kroumen, a race of blacks who inhabit principally the coast near Cape Palmas, lying off the African continent.

It is erroneous to suppose that all these men had voluntarily joined the nefarious craft in which they were now sailing; they had, in many cases been employed in British and Foreign traders, and had been taken out of them when the vessels were burnt and the Europeans of the crew murdered. They had received a promise of reward if they did their duty, but, not expecting that reward, waited for the earliest opportunity of effecting an escape.

Despite the intense rays of a vertical sun, Paul Jones is abeam of his schooner, with a glass in his hand, sweeping the offing, as if in expectation of some vessel heaving in sight.

The officers and crew are lying about with that listlessness a tropical climate engenders, and, panting with the extreme heat, are waiting with much impatience for the evening sea-breeze to fan their parched foreheads.

With their rough beards, exposed chests, and fierce and weatherbeaten countenances, they form a group, even in repose, formidable.

Conspicuous among the motley assemblage are three individuals, respectively named Rotaldo, (a Spaniard by birth) Black Bill and De'il's Rob; they seemed earnestly engaged in a conversation, which ran as follows:—

"I know that something will happen," observed Black Bill, arousing himself from a reverie into which he had fallen. "I am convinced that the vessel I saw during last night's watch was no other than the Fiend's or Devil's ship."

"What the Flying Dutchman, as they call her?" rejoined De'il's Rob.

"Yes, that's her name," continued the other. "I've often heard of the infernal craft, but it was never my fate to fall in with her before."

"Well, hope it will never be again."

"No such good fortune, messmate," returned Black Bill. "Vanderdecken never fails to pay a second visit to those whom he has favoured with a first, and his appearance has ever been the harbinger of misery to all on board the ship he signals."

"I don't believe half the yarns they spin about this Phantom Skipper."

"The matter is beyond all doubt," interrupted the Spaniard, gloomily. "I have seen that which you reject as an idle tale."

"Indeed, and how did the Flying Dutchman appear to you?"

"I can hardly tell you, since I saw but the loom of her hull," replied Rotaldo. "We were in thirty degrees north latitude—the night was fine, and the heavens bright. Under top-gallant sails I had turned

in, when, about two o'clock in the morning, the mate came down and asked me to come on deck."

"Did you obey him?"

"Not at first; I wanted to know what was the matter. He could hardly tell me, but at length informed me that the men were much frightened for they had seen—"

"What?"

"A ghost ship, as they termed it."

"With this," resumed Rotaldo, "I went aloft. All the horizon was clear, but on the quarter of our barque was a sort of fog, round and thick as a ball, and not more than the length of two cables from us."

"What was your speed at this time?"

"Some four knots and a half free, and yet we could not leave this supernatural vapour."

"Look there!" said the mate.

"Holy virgin! what can it be?"

"No banks up to the windward, and yet a fog in the middle of a clear sky with water and a stiff breeze around it."

"Hark!" said the mate. "Don't you hear voices?"

"Listening, I found he was not mistaken, and there were evidently persons speaking through this dense fog. One, apparently commanding, after a pause, cried out—

"Keep a sharp look out forward!"

"Ay, ay, ay, sir," was given in quick reply.

"Ship on the starboard bow."

"It is accomplished—strike the bell."

"And then we heard it tolled," continued the Spaniard, proceeding with his story. "It must be a vessel, I observed to the mate."

"Then she sails not in the waters of this world," he replied, "for she scuds against wind and tide. Hark!"

"A gun ready!"

"Again the ready response of 'Ay, ay, sir!' was heard out of the fog, which appeared on the last order to near us."

"All ready, sir!"

"Fire!"

"As the word was uttered, a dull booming sound was heard, and, instantly after, a crash like a hundred thunders. The report of that gun played on our ears for hours, and then—"

"Well, and then?" said De'il's Rob.

"Well, and then," replied Rotaldo, gloomily, cutting short his narrative, "the fog cleared off as if by magic, the whole horizon resumed its natural appearance, and there was nothing to be seen of the Flying Dutchman!"

"Is it possible?"

"Basta! there are twenty men who sailed with me on that cruise can tell the same story, and the old Catholic priest of the San Sebastian, to boot, for he was aboard of her, and witnessed the strange encounter."

"My crew, for I was captain of the barque at that time," continued Rotaldo, "one and all said that some misfortune would come upon us, and so it did; for on the morning following, on sounding the well, we found four feet of water. We worked night and day at our pumps, but it gained upon us, and we should assuredly have become food for the sharks, had not an English frigate come to our assistance."

"This, you say, was your first meeting with Vanderdecken?"

"San're de Dios! yes," replied Rotaldo; "my second was truly appalling! As I have observed, Vanderdecken always appears twice to those he intends to doom; you shall learn what fell out on his next salutation of the San Sebastian."

The conversation which we have just described was unheard on deck, but had not escaped the ears of

Paul Jones, who had descended while Rotaldo was addressing his companions.

The face of the pirate was flushed, but he essayed no remark on the conversation his presence had put an end to.

"She seems a staunch sailor, and a noble craft," said Paul Jones, pointing to the strange vessel he had been reconnoitring, which now appeared to be nearing, and breasting the waves like a dolphin.

"If I know anything of seamanship," continued the speaker, "she'll turn tail when she discovers who we are. But let her fly like chaff before the wind, she'll find it a difficult matter to get out of our clutches."

Orders were given to brace the main-topsail, for a stiff breeze had suddenly set in.

"See if you can make them out," said the pirate captain, placing his telescope in the hands of Black Bill.

"It will never do," replied the seaman, shaking his head. "I am not mistaken when I suspect that this is the same vessel that spoke to us only last night."

"Last night!" reiterated Paul Jones, affecting surprise. "How is it that you have not acquainted me before of this? You know my process is ever strict and peremptory!"

"As you please," said Black Bill. "It matters but little whether I am brained by your hand, or launched from the yard-arm for disobeying orders, since I have seen—"

"Who?"

"The devil! and now the truth's out."

"You have taken three-quarter grog this morning."

"No; though I have had a visitation of spirits, I have taken none, and if my two eyes have the least knowledge of the business attached to their situation in my head, I last night, during the watch, saw the Flying Dutchman."

"I am surprised," said Paul Jones, addressing Black Bill, derisively, "that a man like you, educated for the church, and losing a fortune at the faro table, should be imbued with a superstition peculiar to the common sailor only!"

"I am not marvellously inclined to the supernatural," the pirate captain continued, "and I promise this Flying, or, rather, lieing Dutchman, if I come athwart him, some rough treatment. My guns shall send him and his hellish crew to the fiend from whom, probably, they derive their existence!"

Black Bill uttered no further remonstrance, but obeyed the first order he had received by going forward, placing the glass to his eye, and attentively watching the stranger in the offing.

As the seaman did so, he gloomily murmured to himself—

"Well, well, when Paul Jones goes to his namesake, Davey, the devil will say that he never swallowed a more pretty considerably damned good sort of a seaman!"

"Pshaw! If you talk of good seamen, it's not such a one as Paul," answered a voice, in close proximity. "Paul's proud—a seaman should be mild as he is valiant. Paul submits to no control—a seaman should know how to treat as well as to command his crew. Paul has no country—no love. A seaman should always have two glorious stimulants to his duty—the praises of his native land, and the approbation of his maid, who, though far distant, watches the moon with him when he is in the maintops, and prays, as heartily as he fights, for victory and safe return!"

Black Bill turned, and encountered the earnest and dark orbs of the speaker, a youth standing at a little distance from him.

This youth could not have been more than eighteen,

perhaps not so much, as his slight, symmetrical, and effeminate figure denoted perfect immaturity; but the intelligence and fire of his glances betokened that his spirit and resolution were far in advance of his years.

Jetty hair overshadowed his cheek, the olive tint of which proclaimed him at once a native of some southern and sunny clime.

Gonzalvi, for that was the name given this boy, who acted as cabin attendant to Paul Jones, was attired in accordance with the received usages of those who adopted his calling. He wore linen trousers reaching to the knee, a striped cotton shirt, a cashmere shawl round his waist, and a vest and jacket of dark velvet, with pendant gold buttons hanging over his shoulder, after the fashion of the Mediterranean fisherman.

His head was covered by a Turkish skull-cap, handsomely embroidered; a pair of rings adorned his ears, and an antique cross and chain hung suspended around his neck.

Taken by surprise at the words and the appearance of the youth, Black Bill, for a moment, contemplated him. There seemed neither treachery in his eye, nor falsehood on his tongue.

"You have spoken, rightly, Gonzalvi," at length exclaimed the seaman, seemingly satisfied that his companion spoke to him in good faith. "I see not that the merits of the tyrant who governs us are greater than ours."

"At least our boasting is less."

"The followers of Paul Jones are as well able to maintain their rights as he is to withhold them, and I see no reason why they should be denied us."

"It is a disgrace to the crew to allow this arrogant Scot to carry off their laurels, when so many may be found to lower his crest."

"I could lay my hand upon one who might well fill his place," continued the youth, suiting his actions to his words by slapping Black Bill on the shoulder. "A stout arm and a strong heart have accomplished wonders ere this."

There was music in the tones that vibrated in a singular manner upon the ear of the seaman.

"As I have a soul to be saved," he thought, "but that they are boy lips that uttered the speech, I could have sworn it was the voice of her who—"

"But no," continued Black Bill, hesitatingly; "the eyes are darker, and it may be larger; and yet I can swear they had the same look, too. Hark ye, youngster, I suspect you are trying my fidelity to the captain, and for a trifling word would expose me to his suspicion."

Gonzalvi could scarce forbear a smile at the remark, but he shook his head in denial.

The smile that severed the youth's lips displayed a row of pearls.

"The very teeth are Emona's," shouted the seaman.

"Zounds, why should I doubt the fact any longer? Am I not expecting the Flying Dutchman, and isn't it as plain as the nose on my face that this is the commencement of his vagaries?"

Further dispute was ended by the summons of Paul Jones for Black Bill to report signals.

"Can't sight her exactly, captain," said he, "she appears to me now a three masted vessel, black hull, and, if I may judge from appearances, armed to the teeth."

"That's hardly possible," said Paul Jones; "the Siberia carries very little metal, except that in the shape of gold. We shall soon see, however. Clap on! the sea breeze is rising in the offing, so let our vessel crowd all the sail she can bear!"

"I must send my boy aloft," continued the pirate, who had noticed Gonzalvi approaching him. "Take

my glass," said he, addressing the youth; "let me try your eyesight and see what you think of the strange craft which is now veering to our lee-bow."

Gonzalvi, compliant with command, ascended the rigging with the agility of a cat, and confirmed the correctness of the previous intelligence.

"'Tis she, by ——" cried the pirate chieftain, jumping from, and then, as if checking himself, immediately resuming, the seat he had taken on one of the water barrels.

"How many guns do you think the stranger carries?" continued Paul, casting his eye upon Gonzalvi, who was still aloft, and watching intently his movements.

"Can't tell, yet, captain," replied the boy; "she appears a large vessel."

Paul Jones hastily swallowed some brandy from a flask which he snatched from his pocket, and, with a look of anger, commenced pacing the deck.

"Be smart, lads!" he cried, after he had taken a few seconds' survey of the vessel; "we shall have warm work when we come athwart her. That's the Siberia, sure enough. Furl the awnings, and run the anchor up to the bows!

"If I am not sadly mistaken," continued the buccaneer, "there's more gold in yonder craft than your chests will hold, and the good merchants of Oporto will have to wait a little longer for their specie."

The pirate crew were immediately on the alert. According to command, the awnings were furled, and all men stretching aft the spring cable, walked the anchor to the bows.

In two minutes more the schooner was standing out on her track, shaping her course so as to cut off her antagonist.

The wind freshened, and the vessel darted through the water with the impetuosity of a dolphin after its prey.

In a short time the ship that had been seen was plainly to be distinguished, but her force could not be ascertained, for the sun had kissed the western wave, and daylight had disappeared.

Whether the El Malachor had been perceived or not it was impossible for her crew to determine; but, in any case, she had been treated with contempt.

In the space of an hour, the pirates were within a mile of the enemy, and the eyes of Paul Jones were fixed upon them through a night glass. Swift as lightning, the ships came within cable's length of each other.

The pirate, now standing upon the gunwale, hailed.

The reply was speedily given, first in Portuguese and then in Dutch.

"Heave to, or I'll sink you!" shouted Paul Jones, in the second named language.

A general discharge from a broadside of caronades, followed by a heavy volley of musketry, was the decided answer.

The broadside, too much elevated to hit the low hull of the schooner, passed over her without effect; but, nevertheless, when the smoke had cleared off, it was discovered that the pirate leader himself had been severely wounded.

"'Tis not the work of the foe!" cried at least twenty voices. "The mischief came from the mizen top of our own vessel."

This was the spot from which Gonzalvi had taken his survey of the adversary, but the boy could not have possibly fired the shot, he having descended to the deck after giving his report to the captain.

This circumstance seemed for the moment to spread an universal panic among the pirates, who began to imagine they were about to contend with an enemy without flesh and blood. But this feeling was as quickly dispelled as experienced, and, while con-

veying Paul Jones to a place of safety, exclaimed, severally—

"Revenge! They shall pay dearly for this! Blood for blood, if we drink it!"

These desperate men had not been idle during the chase: the long gun in the centre of the ship had been cleared from the encumbrances which surrounded it, the other guns had been cast loose, shot handed, and everything prepared for action with all the precision, energy and discipline of a first-rate man-of-war.

Before the pirates had been able to return the fire of their foe, a typhoon raged, as if by enchantment, and left the men and their ship in a perfect murky gloom. It appeared as if some dense and opaque black cloud had been hurled along by the furious blast.

Nothing was to be seen but the white foam of the sea, which resembled waves broken by enormous chalk rocks.

The stay-sail, yielding to the force of the wind, was rent into ribands, and cracked with the turbulence of the squall.

In a few moments the storm blew over, the mist partially cleared up, and the crew of the *El Malachor* discovered that the vessel they had encountered was about to come down upon them. Already her gigantic cut-water was within ten yards of their vessel, which they expected would be severed into two by the terrible concussion. In this emergency, as many as could stationed themselves upon the weather gunwale, while all were ready to catch at the ropes of the stranger, and climb to board her.

The cutwater the next instant touched the sides of the supposed fated schooner.

One general cry, or rather shriek, was raised by the crew. They sprang to catch at the rigging of the bowsprit, which was now forcing itself between their masts. They caught at air—nothing! There was neither shock, concussion, or violent concourse between the vessels! The opposing ship seemed, as it were, to cleave through them; her hull passed along with the silence of death; her timbers cracked not, neither fell her masts; the foreyard glided through their mainsail, yet the canvas was unrent—the whole vessel seemed to cut through the pirate's schooner without inflicting an injury or leaving a trace of her passage! This she effected not fast, but as if she was in reality sawing through her opponent, with the tossing and heaving of the boiling sea and her sharp prow.

"When the *El Malachor* had passed over, her captain, a man of hardy and strong build, but ghastly appearance, was seen to walk aft and look over the taffrail. Then was heard the shrill whistle of her boatswain's pipe, the creaking of her timbers, the moaning of her masts: the gloom again enshrouded the region, and, in a second, she had disappeared.

Rotaldo, who had taken command in the absence of Paul Jones, at the moment felt a hand upon his arm, and the cold darted through his whole frame as a mysterious voice screamed in his ear—

"Your ship is doomed, for that is the Flying Dutchman!"

CHAPTER II.

SIGNALS OF DANGER.—WHAT APPEARED TO CESAR WHILE ON THE STARBOARD WATCH.—THE COMPACT.

The sudden gloom which had fallen on the *El Malachor*, had the effect of rendering every object still more indistinct to her awe-stricken and astonished crew.

For some moments not a word was uttered by a

soul of that usually desperate band. Some remained with their eyes gazing in the direction of the quarter from which the phantom ship had seemed to depart, while others, equally confounded with terror and wonder, turned away to indulge in their gloomy and foreboding thoughts.

Since the apparition, Rotaldo had remained on the poop. He now gradually approached those who were peering into the surrounding darkness, and, looking steadfastly at the men, said—

"I must tell you, messmates, that you must prepare for bad weather."

"Bad weather!" echoed De'il Rob, acting as spokesman of the party whom the words of the Spaniard had roused from a deep reverie.

"Yes, bad weather, De'il Rob. There never was a vessel which fell in with what we have just seen, but met with disaster soon after. Santa Maria! the very name of Vanderdecken is unlucky."

"What has the name of Vanderdecken to do with it?" asked De'il Rob.

"The captain we have just seen is Mynheer Vanderdecken," answered the Spaniard; "he is the Flying Dutchman!"

"How do you know that?"

"Never mind," replied Rotaldo, "that is my secret. Remember, only, that I have warned you of danger, as my duty."

"Vanderdecken, the Flying Dutchman! Why, that's the infernal craft you were speaking of—he who fires hot shot and gives no quarter! The devil save us, then, for we shall, of course, go to the bottom! But what's the use of being unhappy? Even there we shall meet with all sorts of spirits."

The individual who had made this remark solaced his sentiments with a copious draught of brandy, which he drank from a bottle that was seldom out of his hand; his sobriquet, or bye-name, was Brandy-nose Nick, an appellation somewhat appropriate, if we take into consideration his propensity for strong waters. The tippler had married in early life a woman well to do in the world, or, to use her own words, she had as nice and genteel a marine store shop as any lady in the land; no princess could boast a better stock of rags, phials, bones and old iron.

No sooner had she wedded the insinuating Nick, than he sold all her stock in trade, and spent the money in liquor.

All her bones went down his salt water throat, her rags were turned into rum, and her old iron melted into Old Tom.

Every farthing she had in the world had galloped off in grog, or toddled in toddy.

Even the black doll over her door had been swallowed in a flash of lightning, or, in common parlance, a glass of gin.

But Nick was easy under all circumstances, and never considered his better half, in all her upbraidings, near so rusty as the old metal he had disposed of.

One night, in a fit of intoxication, he had been inveigled on board the buccaneer's barque, where, nothing loth, he fulfilled the duties of ship-steward, an office he still held, with credit to himself, and satisfaction to those who had so successfully cajoled him.

"Well, I never was so puzzled or so frightened in my life," said De'il Rob, resuming the previous conversation, which had been dropped for a few moments. "I can't help thinking that we've been all asleep, and some vision has appeared to us in a dream."

"Diablo!" exclaimed Rotaldo, nervously twitching the cuchillo or long knife that hung by his side, "I will hold a wager of ten rose nobles to as many silver reals of Spain, that the spectre skipper intends further mischief!"

"Then you really think this Vanderdecken is a supernatural being?"

"Yes," replied the Spaniard. "I, at least, have no doubt of it."

"I thought the age of miracles had passed away with the prophets of old," said De'il Rob, "and that we mortals were now left to our own exertions, and had no other warning than such as was given to us by the appearance of the heavens."

"And they warn us now," said Rotaldo. "See how again the ocean has risen within these five minutes; the moon has escaped, but will soon catch it again, and see that vivid flash in the north-west."

"I can bray the elements as well as any man who skims the salt water, and will do my best to avert that fate which I fear threatens us," continued the Spaniard, whose demeanour assumed a gloomier appearance than ever. "I have cared little for gales or weather; I have stood, in a storm, between a plank and eternity. I have faced death in flood and battle, but never till now quailed, as I do at the warning we have had to-night."

"Clap a stopper on your jawing-tackle, Rotaldo, and let your red rag go upon some other tack," chimed in Brandy-nosed Nick, who, through his frequent potations, had become more valorous than usual. "I don't believe a word about this Vanderdecken. To be sure I didn't see anything of him, 'cos I was drunk in the cock-pit when he hailed us; but you are all much in the same way I take it, and you fancied you saw what ain't in existence—a parcel of ghosts. Pshaw! they've been done away with since they hung the last resurrectionist."

Having delivered himself thus eloquently, the intoxicated toper took a lusty pull at his favourite bottle, by way of parenthesis, and then commenced singing the following appropriate lines on the subject:

"Talk of spirits indeed, why the man is an ass,
Who dreads any spirits but those in the glass;
For devils or such like, a fig, mates, I say,
For 'blue ruin,' my boys drives blue devils away."
Fol-de-rol-lol, &c.

"Flying to grog when the ship is sinking does no good, Nick," said De'il Rob; "and the more you drink under such circumstances, the more miserable you get."

"I can't agree with you, Rob," sighed Nick with the brandy nose. "I've only been miserable since my marriage with Belinda Blubber—that was my wife's maiden name—and as for drinking, let me ask you, as a sensible man," (De'il Rob smiled at the compliment) "how could I kill the misery of life without grog? What's the use of being unhappy?"

If happiness consists in sailing with three sheets in the wind, you are the most successful man that ever steered by the thirty two points of the compass; for, to my certain knowledge, you are never sober."

"Never was, 'cept by some infernal accident," was the rejoinder of Brandy-nose; "not to say sober as a parson, though I'm told some of that cloth has no objection to a drop when they feel inclined that there way."

"It ain't no effects on Nick," said Fergus Blake, one who had been a seaman, standing by his side, "not all the spirit in the world. He's been in the water, on the water and about the water so long and swabed up such a sight of salt that all the spirituous drink as ever was 'stilled wouldn't intoxicate him like a gentleman, he only gets what the land-lubbers call spooney."

"Ah," continued another called Harpoon. "I've heard that they have got up a 'sociation that means to do away with drinking altogether."

"Well then, all I can say is that that their 'sociation will be guilty of my *felo-de-se*, and I'll go and

break my heart if they carries out their proposition; but there it's no use being unhappy, directly the act of parliament comes into operation for not piping all hands to grog I shall jump overboard and die as I have lived in liquor."

At the bare idea of a universal *Maiae Liquor Law* the unfortunate Brandy-nosed Nick gave considerable symptoms of fainting and was only restored to his proper focus as he termed it by the application of sundry draughts of his favourite beverage.

The Pirate's schooner was once more floating motionless on still waters, and her sails hung down listlessly from the yards.

Aloft soared the moon in silvered beauty reflecting vividly the sails and masts of the vessel in extended lines on the bright and placid ocean.

Presently again all was darkness.

The waters rippled short, then broke in foam.

The lofty and smaller sails had been taken in by the pirate crew and their ship was cleaving through the waves.

The wind, rising in angry moanings, proclaimed that it had been awakened up to wrath, and was gathering strength to hurl destruction on the guilty and doomed mariners.

These were busily engaged in reducing their sails, but they, wretched men, worked with sullenness and discontent.

Each minute the gale increased.

"The wind is not steady," observed Rotaldo, who had now taken the helm, attended by De'il Rob. "By heaven! there is no telling from which quarter the storm may blow. It has already veered round five points. My heart's as heavy as lead, and—"

"So is mine," interrupted the other pirate, "but it's no use grunting like the ricketty ribs of our rolling vessel. Let us put trust in good seamanship, and who knows but what we may cheat old Beelzebul yet."

At this moment, the struggling ship was taken aback, from the wind chopping round, and careened low to its violence.

"Hard aport! slacken forward—brail up the try-sail!" shouted Rotaldo, in a voice that emulated the fury of the gale.

The pirate seamen obeyed the order, shook the water from their streaming clothes, and took advantage of the night to then hide themselves away and commune with their own terror.

Every man seemed to prefer solitude, and to harbour his own thoughts.

The night wore apace, but without further danger. It was interminably long, and all on board the devoted schooner seemed to think, as if by mutual consent, that the dawning daylight would never come.

At last, the dreary darkness of the night changed, by degrees, to a solemn, settled, and sullen grey gloom.

It was now that Caesar, a negro sailor, on the forecastle, discerned a black speck, apparently no bigger than a man's hand, floating afar off in the horizon. Struck by the singular occurrence, he continued to watch the object that had attracted his notice. It gradually became more exposed to his view, and, by its increasing bulk, he could at once see that, whatever this same object might be, it would eventually approach the ship.

Curiosity or surprise closed his lips, for he did not communicate with his messmates, but steadfastly gazed on the spot, from which the mass seemed gliding.

As the sky cleared up, and the sun burst forth, Caesar's eyes, which had never been removed from

the object that was interesting him, could now distinguish that it was strewn with the fragments of some vessel's spars and water casks, and presently, that it was covered, also, with emaciated forms, or rather corpses, which, turning round and round in the froth of the encompassing waves, one after the other were fast disappearing.

A flash of certainty entered into the mind of the African, as, with a quick beating heart, he gasped out—

"By —, it's a raft!"

The exclamation drew many pirates to the side of the vessel, who, in an amazement equal to their sable messmate's, beheld the ghastly spectacle presented to their sight. It was, indeed, a scene of desolation and of death, which may be told in a few short words.

On a frail raft, fifty human beings had for days been huddled together, without a drop of water, existing solely on a few handfuls of biscuit. The poor creatures had struggled manfully against hunger, but thirst had enforced its more imperious demands; in a state of torpor, and with the sun glaring fiercely upon them, they beheld the shark on the blue wave, awaiting his miserable victim.

At such a moment why should they wish to preserve life? They rose, with tottering steps, and cast their bloodshot eyes upon the horizon. The ear of succour was deaf to their cries; they saw sky and water—nothing more.

Night succeeds morning, and morning night, to reveal only the horrible solitude.

The more feeble, tired and worn out by their afflictive feelings, fall into a sleep that has hitherto been denied them: they dream of home, wife and children—but, alas, they will see no more those blissful ties!

It was a lovely night—a night for contemplation, for examination of the heart and adoration of the Deity! when mortality commenced his march, nor halted till thirty-seven souls had winged their flight to regions of repose and peace!

Then followed another and still greater affliction; it was the dreadful miasm arising from the putrefaction of so many bodies, which the survivors could not put aside, having neither strength, nor force of any mental faculty to remove the dead.

The effluvia became, in a short space of time, so powerful, as not only to be a source of the greatest disgust and horror, but the generator of a most virulent fever, to which event each of the miserable outcasts succumbed. There was some peculiarity in this pestilence. It was noticed that the limbs of the infected did not stiffen, as would have been the case if they had died of any other disorder, while the gangrenous tumours that appeared on the livid flesh, made them objects too loathsome to look upon. In many cases the features were frightfully distorted—the tongues of the suffering wretches swollen and protruding, the hands clenched, and the toes bent towards the soles of the feet; everything denoting the dreadful pangs that must have attended dissolution.

Amidst this ghastly group stood one, still alive, and, apparently, in the full vigour of robust health. How he had escaped the fate of his inanimate companions was a marvel to all beholders; but it would have been no longer one, had they been acquainted with the means by which this individual had preserved his existence.

He was one of that fraternity whose doctrines were a mystery to our earliest philosophers, and have continued so to our own times. Participating in the immortal life of the celestials, he was said to have found the secret to arrest death, fascinate the foe danger, and to move on earth and ocean scatheless

and unharmed; whether there was truth or not in the superstitious assertion, time and circumstance will show.

"Ship ahoy!" shouted the solitary, waving his hat as a signal to the surprised pirates.

"There's yet a man on board!" was the general cry. "Lower a rope, and let's see what account he can give of himself, and the vessel from which he seems to have escaped."

The next moment a figure was seen ascending the sides of the schooner, and, having reached its summit, dexterously threw himself forward at once upon the deck.

The party who had been thus rescued from his perilous position was a little, meagre personage, habited in the garb of a Dutch sailor of the period, with a cap of dark fur hanging over his brow. His features were sharp, harsh and diminutive, and his face was deadly pale, fringed by hair of a mixture of red and white.

He called himself Hans Hickman, and professed himself to be a sea pilot.

Having very little show of that becoming appendage, a beard, it was a somewhat difficult matter to determine what was the age of this individual; he might have been either a sickly youth, sinking prematurely into decrepitude, or a man in years, hale in constitution, but carrying little flesh.

The most important feature that attracted notice was the "eye" of Hans Hickman. Mark you, he had but one, and that of the description vulgarly denominated a piercer.

The right lid was partially closed, and the ball appeared to have been burnt out by a cautery of hot iron, or caustic medicine; but his left eye, for the size of his puny face and head, was of unusual dimensions. It was the eye of a tigress at bay, and a serpent, and in which the fiend-like glare of the animal mingled with the glazed and sunken scowl of the hideous and malignant reptile.

It was further rendered odious by having lash neither above nor below it.

So remarkable was this feature, that when you looked at its possessor, you seemed to look at the eye and nothing else.

It was not Hans Hickman with one eye, but one eye with Hans Hickman attached to it. But, notwithstanding his peculiar aspect, he appeared very different from the common seaman he represented himself to be.

His other features, although sharp, were very regular, and there was an air of superiority even in his fawning and obsequious character, which commanded respect, while it impressed an indescribable awe.

There was one of the pirate crew, more than all the rest, who looked upon Hans Hickman with wonder and amazement; this was Black Bill. The sudden apparition caused him to exclaim to himself—

"Can it be possible? I thought he was drowned when we went down in Table Bay."

"How did you escape?" he continued, in a whisper, addressing the little man, while the rest of the crew were debating what would be the best course to pursue with regard to him; for his preservation from the death which had befallen his companions had been looked upon as miraculous, and their late adventure with Vanderdecken had not diminished their wonted superstition.

"Then you know me?" chuckled Hans, fixing his eye on Bill—whether in malice or satisfaction he could not tell. "I am not surprised at that; those who have had dealings with seldom forget me."

The pirate shrunk for a moment beneath the withering gaze of the red orb darted upon him; but

intense anxiety lent him strength to again utter the words—

"How did you escape?"

"How did I escape?" echoed Hans, who remained motionless, with his arms folded on his breast. "That's an odd question for you to put, and before I answer it I must ask how did you escape?"

"I was thrown up by the waves, but——"

"But," interrupted the other, "the waves ought not to have thrown me up, eh?"

"I have not said so."

"Perhaps not; but I doubt not that you wish it had been so; the murderer can scarcely be expected to welcome a victim who rises from the grave he has dug for him."

"You are a fool to threaten me," said Black Bill, regaining his wonted composure and determination. "What is to hinder me from handing you over to the tender mercies of my messmates, who appear already to view you with anything but favour?"

"They will not harm me."

"You don't know us. The buccaneer has no law but that which confirms his will."

"Then he is no enemy of mine; listen and learn. Darkness is upon my days, and the shadow of desolation is flung over my soul; the bright flowers of my youthful days have been withered by the simoon blast of revenge; the beauty and purity of my young spirit's imaginings have been thwarted, and I am now like the fabled wanderer of old, a man of desolation and death."

"The devil you are!" said Black Bill, in serious doubt whether he was addressing a maniac or a magician. "And how long have you been one?"

"The day had but shed the acorn which, growing into a sturdy oak, now forms this vessel, when I was fated to haunt the ocean, and shall haunt it, unless released, till the crack of doom!"

"There are means, then, afforded of escaping from this terrible destiny?"

"Yes one: swear to maintain inviolate secrecy on our present interview, and I promise to reveal to you my unholy knowledge, and give a brighter future than that which is allotted to man."

The above conversation was somewhat abruptly interrupted by the pirates returning to the spot upon which the speakers had been standing. They had, in the first instance, determined to kill the unhappy wretch they had rescued, but eventually discovered they might turn his life to account.

With this understanding, we proceed to relate the incidents of the next chapter.

CHAPTER III.

THE PIRATES' CAROUSEL.—GONZALVI'S INTERVIEW WITH THE PHANTOM PILOT.—POISON AND ITS ANTIDOTE.

The superstitious awe which had taken possession of the pirate crew, in a few hours subsided, and they cheated themselves into the idea that some extraordinary allusion, from some extraordinary source, for which there was no accounting, was the cause of creating in them an unnecessary alarm.

Such an interpretation of the mysterious encounter with the Flying Dutchman having satisfied the desperadoes, whose wrong and venturesome mode of life offered little time for serious contemplation, they were once again following their separate pursuits and desires, which mainly consisted in drinking or playing at cards and dice.

Hours passed by merrily, and night arrived, to find the carousers and gamblers still enjoying themselves—the thirst of each appearing to increase, instead of diminishing, with their potations, if it

could be judged from the fresh broaching of kegs, containing Schiedam, Nantz and Muscadel.

Good humour and loud shouts prevailed on all sides, as the cups were passed from hand to hand.

In vain did Rotaldo, who began to be seriously apprehensive of the consequences, enjoin the men to abstain from further intemperance. In absence of their leader, Paul Jones, his authority was set at nought.

These boisterous wassailers gave themselves up more and more to enjoyment, and, in order to set themselves completely at ease, unbuckled their belts, removed their caps, and, in the end, disengaged themselves of their weapons.

Stretching themselves luxuriously on the deck, chests, and barrels, they lighted their pipes, and gradually dropped, through inebriety, into a sound slumber.

Insensibly, all around sank into silence; by degrees, the hot vapour of the day had ceased, and expired like the smouldering remains of an unfed fire, while all powerful voluptuousness reigned over the organs during the succeeding night, which appeared to become brighter and brighter through the starlit heavens.

It would not have been without a vivid interest to the observer, had he beheld in the solemn silence a shadowy form, clothed in a white Arab cloak, rise as a spectre among the recumbent forms of the sleeping pirates.

From its trembling step, scarce audible—from its quick yet gentle respiration—from its flexible and delicate stature, which stood out in strong relief from surrounding obscurity, might be easily recognised the figure of the youth, Gonzalvi.

For a moment he watched the group around him, then cautiously retired to the forepart of the vessel, which was now entirely deserted, except by one person, who appeared to be a stranger to him.

Gonzalvi's first impulse was to awake his comrades, but on second consideration deemed it more advisable to regard, with a strict scrutiny, his associate, who was dozing, before giving an alarm.

The attitude of this individual was somewhat striking to his observer.

One arm, flung across his body, concealed entirely, with its loose and long sleeve, the greater part of his face, leaving only a wrinkled forehead visible.

The opened and released hand, and the deep, regular, and soft breathing beneath the coverture, gave all the tokens of the most profound slumber.

Deeply impressed with curiosity, Gonzalvi was about to remove the obstacle which concealed the features of the dreamer, when he started up, and seized the youth's wrist with some such tenacity as the vice holds its gripe.

Gonzalvi would fain have cried out, but terror chained his tongue. At length, after gazing for some moments on the hideous form of Hans Hinchman—for he, indeed, it was—he managed to stammer out—

"Who—who are you?"

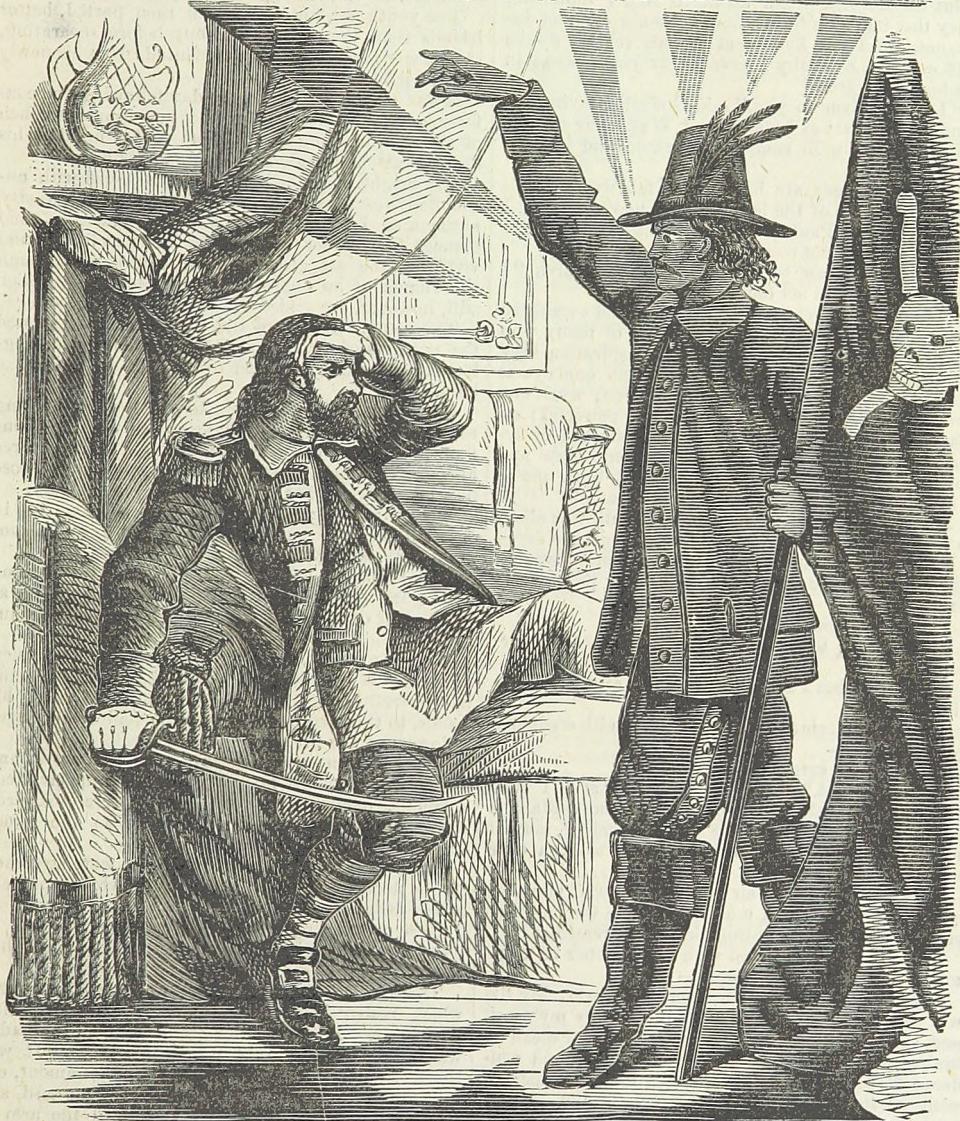
"I leave that for your memory to answer," replied the addressed. "How I came on board this vessel I can understand is a mystery to you, seeing that till now you have not quitted the side of your captain, Paul Jones."

"Ah," continued Hans, "Paul Jones is a brave fellow, and I glory in those who dare. I'm afraid he'll be some time before he gets over his wound, perhaps, never."

"Is it mortal?"

"Perhaps yes—perhaps no," continued the mannikin, provokingly. "We can tell how he got the hurt, can't we, eh? You don't remember me, Gonzalvi—I remember you."

THE FROZEN CREW OF THE ICE BOUND SHIP



"FORBEAR, I CHARGE YOU, MAN OR DEVIL, WHICHEVER YOU BE!" SHOUTED PAUL JONES.

"Heavens! should he know all!" murmured the youth. "I must conciliate this wretch, or he will hurl destruction on me."

Ceasing his banter, Hans Hinckman's eye seemed to

pierce into the very recesses of the soul of his companion, as he uttered, in a firm voice—

"Paul Jones sleeps soundly, but he sleeps in darkness, and there shall be for him a day-spring; his

waking thoughts are yet as vain and wild as those which are wheeling their giddy dance through his slumbering brain; but the dream shall be dissolved, and—”

Suddenly, again altering his demeanour towards Gonzalvi, the speaker approached the youth with his right hand extended, and in no longer the menacing attitude he had assumed.

“Let there be a truce between us,” continued Hans. “Interest, the strongest tie that human nature knows, should make us friends.”

“I am content,” answered the other; “but what security do you offer that you will observe the truce you have proposed?”

“My simple word alone,” answered Hans, dryly. “But for the risk I am about to run, I somewhat fancy that it is you from whom I should demand assurance, did I not know that treason seldom dwells with courage, a quality I have learnt you possess in the highest degree.”

“I shall be true to you,” said Gonzalvi, laying his hand on his heart as he spoke. “While our fortune wills, we remain in company together, and in good faith.”

“Friendly deeds are better than fair words,” continued Hans; “of the last we have had enough. I come to render Paul Jones an essential service, and one that he will not readily forget.”

“Did I not know better,” muttered Gonzalvi, “I should esteem this act one of a madman’s.”

“Madman’s!” returned Hans, who had overheard the remark. “According to the belief of many who are under the influence of immediate inspiration, they are often right. Know, boy, that when one eye is extinguished the other becomes more keen; when one hand is cut off the other becomes more powerful; so, when our reason in human things is disturbed or destroyed, our view onward becomes more acute and perfect. You will, I suppose, next look upon me as a necromancer, devil worshiper and idolater?”

Loath to answer the question, the youth was about to pass it with that sullen port which seems to say—“I know thee, but will hold no communication,” when his purpose was defeated by the prompt demand—

“You must speak.”

“What if I tell you I am on my captain’s errand?”

“Mine touches Paul Jones more nearly. I bring him health.”

Gonzalvi measured Hans Hinckman with credulous eyes, replying—

“You are no surgeon.”

“Perhaps not,” interrupted Hans; “still I have some skill in healing wounds, and as your captain is sinking rapidly from the one he has received, may it not be as well that I undertake to work a cure on—”

“Stay. There is an air of mystery about you that begets suspicion, and I must have some warrant that you are not bringing poisons instead of remedies.”

Hans, though displeased with the manner of Gonzalvi’s reply, answered calmly—

“You have nothing to fear on that score. My life will be in your comrades’ hands if I betray my trust, and, surely that is sufficient guarantee that I mean no foul play; but, nevertheless, your caution and prudence does you credit, though they may be dispensed with in the present instance, and, if not greatly mistaken, I can give you proof of my earnest sincerity.”

“Your token?”

“This!”

With the words, Hans whispered in the ear of Gonzalvi.

The youth was struck with the solemnity of the ob-

testation, and now answered with more cordiality than he had yet exhibited—

“Friend, you must not think ill of me if I treated you in the first instance somewhat brusquely in this matter; but you must bear in mind that—”

“You gave me a cold return for a well-meant kindness,” interrupted Hans, shrugging his shoulders as one who wishes to avoid an unpleasant topic, “but that didn’t surprise me, for few men live, now a days, who know their enemies, and, in these latitudes, the art of destroying life is as general as the art of cooking.”

Gonzalvi smiled an assent, adding—

“But I must for the present bid you adieu. I am wanted in the captain’s cabin; at noon, when he slumbers, I will speak again with you.”

The youth and his companion then parted, better friends than they had met; but before separating, the former received further credentials from his newly found friend.

It was on the decline of the day following the conference, that Paul Jones lay in his cabin on his couch of sickness, loathing it as much in his mind as his desperate wound made it unseemly to his body.

His bright eye, which at all times shone with uncommon keenness and splendour, had its vivacity augmented by fever and mental impatience, and glanced from under his unshorn locks as fitfully and vividly as the last gleams of the sun shoot through the clouds of an approaching thunderstorm, which still, however, are gilded by its lustre.

The manly features of the pirate chieftain shewed the progress of wasting illness, and his beard, neglected and untrimmed, had overgrown both lips and chin.

Casting himself from side to side—now clutching towards his coverings, which he at the next moment flung from him; his tossed couch and eager gestures at once exhibited that energetic disposition, whose natural sphere is that of the most active exertion.

Beside the couch of Paul Jones stood Gonzalvi, in face, attitude and manner, the strongest possible contrast to the suffering pirate.

The faithful youth had not lain aside his clothing for nights, enjoying but such momentary repose as the warden of a sick chamber might by snatches indulge.

He had scarcely, since his attendance on his master, changed his position, except to administer medicine and refreshment, an office performed only by his hands, to the surprise of those who had been longer followers of the invalid.

The cabin in which these personages were had more of a warlike than a sumptuous appearance; weapons, offensive and defensive, were scattered about the apartment, or disposed upon the wood-work that supported it.

Skins of animals slain in the chase were stretched on the floor, or extended with the skeleton monsters of the deep along the sides.

Here and there were massive chests exposed to view, and laden with spoil taken in some recent marauding expeditions.

The most noticeable trophy was a mighty sword, which rested within arm’s length of the reclining buccaneer. It was a long and two-edged bladed weapon he had brought from the Levant. It was black from hilt to point, destitute of ornament, except some golden hieroglyphics near the guard, and of a weight which would have wearied the arm of any other than that of the herculean Paul Jones.

“I think the crew of this once dreaded vessel have turned women,” said the pirate chieftain, after a long and perturbed silence, spent in the feverish agitation which we have endeavoured to describe; “four days passed in idleness, and not a stiver added to our

coffers; would that I could once more pace the deck to set the lazy lubbers a better example."

"Captain," replied Gonzalvi, "my comrades are as brave and willing as ever to either fight or plunder, but respect for you has kept them inactive. When you appear again among them you will find them more devoted than ever."

"Then they must have no excuse on my account."

As Paul Jones spoke, he thrust his right arm out of bed, naked to the shoulder, and painfully raising himself on his couch, attempted to rise from the same.

It was not without a gentle degree of violence, which the buccaneer would scarce have endured from another, that Gonzalvi, in his character of sick nurse, compelled his patient to replace himself on the couch, and cover his sinewy arm, neck and shoulder, with the care which a mother bestows upon her infant nursling.

"Gonzalvi, you tend me too carefully," said Paul Jones, smiling, while he submitted to the strength which he was unable to resist.

"Captain," replied the youth, with some show of emotion, for which his companion could not account, "what is a wound or fever-fit, that we should not endure them patiently, in order to get rid of them easily?"

"Fever-fit!" exclaimed Paul Jones, impetuously, "a dead lethargy, if you like, which is so infectious it seems that it deprives every one of my followers of speech and action."

"As you value their interest, captain, take this matter less violently."

"This is smoothly said, to soothe a sick man; but does the league of a sworn brotherhood droop with the malady of one man—why should Paul Jones' life or Paul Jones' death affect the actions of one hundred and sixty-four men as brave as himself?

"When the master stag is struck down," continued the pirate chieftain, "the herd do not disperse upon his fall—when the falcon strikes the leading crane, another takes the guidance of the phalanx. Why does not my band assemble and choose some one of their number to whom they may entrust the command of this vessel and maintain its prestige?"

"Senor Rotaldo, captain," answered Gonzalvi, naively, "has, in some measure, taken such an office upon himself."

"Ha!" exclaimed Paul Jones, whose jealousy being awakened gave his mental irritation another direction. "What, because he is as superstitious as yourself, without your indifference to danger. Let the men look well to their leader, or some fine morning they may chance find themselves made merchandise of by English skippers and Spanish pedlars."

As he spoke the buccaneer raised himself suddenly in his bed, while his eyes, sparkling as they were wont to do on the eve of battle, seemed to inquire into the cause of such a proceeding.

"Hark," he said. "What is that passing on the deck above us?"

"Some of the crew appear to be in altercation," answered Gonzalvi, listening attentively, and endeavouring to learn the cause of dispute.

"I can distinguish a stranger in spite of those around him; go and bring some account of this intruder," said Paul Jones to his companion, while, with an impatience of mood, he extended his hand in direction of the cabin door.

"Captain, I can guess what is happening," said Gonzalvi, hastening to obey the order he had received. "The voice you hear is that of a seaman we picked up some few hours ago, the sole survivor of a shipwrecked crew."

"I should have been acquainted with this before," rejoined Paul Jones, angrily, with one glance of fire,

transient as the flash from the cold stony flint. "You are remiss in duty."

"I grant I have done wrong, captain," said Gonzalvi, calmly, "but my care for you made me forgetful in this instance. Remember, when this outcast was taken on board you were in a sleep that had been a stranger to you for many nights, and had I aroused you—"

The sobs of the youth prevented his further utterance; there was something in his manner that struck Paul Jones, and the feelings of the pirate reproached him with undue severity.

Laying his hand upon the shoulder of Gonzalvi, he addressed a few words to him in a more kindly tone. The latter raised his eyes. The black orbs were filled with tears; he looked with a blind gaze on his captain, and thence at his hand which he still suffered to remain on his shoulder.

At this instant the cabin became filled with pirates, while the most conspicuous among the group was the little distorted miniature of humanity, Hans Hinckman.

Hal Harpoon was the first on entering to address this seemingly despised individual.

"And so," he cried, "you have the courage to practise your art upon our noble captain?"

"I have," replied Hans, unabashed by the taunts that were now thickly showered at him. "Aye, and as well as on the meanest living creature. I should make no distinction between the Port Admiral and the cabin boy, when called to exercise the art of healing,"

"Remember," said Fergus Blake, "that heated iron and molten lead will torment your lacerated flesh, if Paul Jones die under your hands."

"That's rather hard justice," returned Hans, dryly, "seeing that I can but use human means, and the issue is written only in the book of futurity."

"Put a clapper on your jawing tackle, Fergus Blake," said Paul Jones, who had, during the interim, received a full report of the physician from his trusty confidant, Gonzalvi. "I am well satisfied with the virtues of this mannikin's medicines, and shall not refuse them."

The seaman looked grimly on the unceremonious buccaneer for a moment, but, on exchanging a glance with another who stood by his side, smoothed his frowning brow as well as he could, and watched with impatience the passing scene. Paul Jones continued to speak.

"Gonzalvi," he exclaimed, "I am going to take a leap in the dark, you will say. It may or it may not be so; difficulties give way to enterprise, and resolution presumes to soar. Your captain will be again amongst you, or you shall give what is left of him a grave in the ocean. I would say more, but this fever has wasted my strength, and my wound becomes more painful. Come, stranger, to your work—to your work."

Hans Hinckman, who had already informed himself of the various symptoms of his patient's illness, now felt his pulse for a long time, and with deep attention, while all around stood silent, and in anxious expectation.

He next filled a cup with cold water, and dipped into it a small red purse, which he, with some formality, took from his bosom.

When the rude sage seemed to think it sufficiently medicated, he was about to offer it to Paul Jones, but was prevented by his abrupt exclamation—

"Belay, man—belay! You have touched my pulse, let me lay a finger on yours; though a rough seaman, I know something of the doctor's art."

Hans Hinckman yielded without hesitation, and his slender dark palm was for an instant enclosed, and almost buried in the large enfoldment of Paul Jones' hand.

"His blood beats as calm as an infant's," said the pirate; "so throb not theirs who stab and poison. Comrades," he continued, "whether I live or die, grant protection and safety to my physician, here, for I am without doubt of his faith."

Paul Jones then raised himself in bed, drained the cup offered to him to the very bottom, and, having again resigned it to Hans Hinckman, sank back as if exhausted upon the cushions beneath his body.

The physician, then, with silent but expressive signs, directed that those present should leave the cabin, excepting himself and Gonzalvi, whom no remonstrance could induce to withdraw.

CHAPTER IV.

PAUL JONES IS WARNED BY A VISION.

For some hours Paul Jones remained in a state of alternate delirium and stupor.

While labouring under the effects of the potion, his ears were assailed continuously by mysterious words, uttered in such unearthly tones, that he could only attribute them to some spirit, or supernatural agency.

Whether the draught he had taken had proved too powerful for his exhausted state, or whether his brain wandered but to reveal reality, he could not tell.

One thing seemed certain—that the scene pictured and the characters pourtrayed to his vision, were sent as a warning of approaching danger to himself.

Suddenly he rose up in a sitting posture, to listen once more to the voices which appeared to issue from the bed of the mighty ocean, upon which the vessel was sailing.

He felt unusual fear—a painful foreboding.

He knew not why.

A violent gust of wind roared round the cabin, the windows were blown in, and the lamp extinguished.

Although the darkness was intense, Paul Jones could discover that he was attended by a stranger, whose form and features were as clear and as defined as if it were noon-day.

Struck by the singularity of the circumstance, and choked with agonising sensations, he was unable to utter a word, while an uncontrollable feeling urged him to watch in silence the actions of his mysterious companion.

His clothes were saturated with the water which had lately fallen.

His visage was white and corpse-like.

Remaining for some minutes without motion, this individual approached the invalid, who, partially recovering from his surprise, found a cold, dripping hand in his own.

It was the grasp of ice.

The chill of death.

Fear seemed to give Paul Jones strength, for he was able to throw himself from his couch, and recoil with horror from the presence of one whom he could look upon but as no other than an apparition.

"Am I awake?" he cried, rubbing his eyes and glancing around him. "Yes; I can distinctly behold through the port-hole yon flock of screaming birds, which, scared by an echo, hover across the ocean.

"Ah, what is that?" continued the pirate, gazing in the direction he had spoken of. "A black speck as it were from the very centre of the waters.

"It advances.

"It assumes the form of a vessel.

"Now a sail appears, white as the foam preceding it.

"It is the barque I have before encountered—it is—

"The Flying Dutchman!"

As these words were uttered a hurricane burst upon the ship.

The canvas flew away in ribands.

Mountains of sea swept over the decks and rigging, whilst in the middle of a deep over-hanging cloud which shrouded the vast expanse, were written in characters of livid flame, the enigmatical sentence—

"Till the crack of doom!"

"Listen to me, Paul Jones," said the unknown, "for my time is short. One hope alone remains, and for this I am permitted, or rather charged to come here."

"You are no longer a being of this earth, then?"

"I am not dead, nor yet am I alive," replied the other. "I linger between this world and the world of spirits."

"Your appeal extended to me the signal of confidence—your declaration destroys it," said the pirate, with a melancholy smile, "so dies, too frequently, the last spark of friendship, when the sigh of adversity should fan it to a flame."

"The world, I know, holds in abhorrence those who league themselves with powers incomprehensible to man," returned the unknown, "and you I find are no exception to the general rule. But 'tis an universal error—there are spirits of good as well as evil, and Vanderdecken, of whom you have spoken, is among their number. Before you condemn, you should, at least, not too severely adjudge one who has both the power and inclination to save you."

Paul Jones nodded a seeming assent to these words, and, by his, demeanour, invited his companion to proceed with his discourse.

"I can give you joy and influence," he continued; "wealth is at my command, and I will bestow it on you."

"Yes, I have heard of one who guards the treasures inexhaustible of a century-lost wreck in these latitudes," answered the pirate, "treasures which, though watched by a spirit, may yet be yielded to a mortal hand."

"They may be yours, even yours," exclaimed the stranger, "though you be only the despised and persecuted Paul Jones, whose long train of dark crimes have branded a name with infamy and brought down upon it the just indignation of every civilised country."

"Already," continued he, "the ships of the outraged nations are on the track to punish your heinous offences, while the powerful arm of justice is about to avenge those injuries which have stained your soul."

"Forbear, I charge you, man or devil, whichever you be!" shouted Paul Jones, raising the sword which rested near his couch. "I know that I have mankind for my enemy; they know that I am prepared to elude their machinations. They must be daring bloodhounds, indeed," added the pirate, "who would venture to beard their prey in his stronghold, and those who have the temerity to attack my good ship, the El Malachor, will perish as wheaten straw in the glowing furnace. Paul Jones may not bear a charmed life, but, backed by his bold crew, is safe from all alarm!"

"He who puts his trust in his fellow man, leans on a frail reed for support," was the other's reply, "and I am prone to think that it is a pity that a heart which beats with pulsations of nobility of purpose, should suffer itself to be so deeply execrated, where it might be so highly honoured."

"You speak in riddles. What would you have me do?"

"Accept the lot which fortune may bestow; in a

word, renounce your present condition, and become once more an honest gentleman."

"What, turn renegade?" exclaimed Paul Jones. "Never!"

There was a long pause, terminated by the stranger remarking—

"I have already told you that my time is short."

"Might it not be more consistent with your profession of friendship," answered Paul Jones, if you lay aside the dark mask which conceals your intentions, and converse with me bare-faced?"

"I am forbid to speak to you in plainer terms here, but have the power to show that I mean well to you elsewhere. Plunge with me into the deep, and—"

"Are there no terms to our compact?" asked Paul Jones.

"None save those which you are at liberty to reject."

"With this concession I may accept your offer."

"Quick, then. Follow me, and fear nothing."

As he spoke these words, the unknown took the pirate's hand and led him to the edge of the cabin window, beneath which lay a small boat.

How Paul Jones reached it, was a mystery as great as the scene which he had just witnessed.

He seemed in his descent to tread upon air, and nothing less, being provided with neither steps nor ladder.

He had no sooner entered the little vessel, than the rope which had hitherto held it to the ship was cast off.

The next moment Paul Jones and his trusty pilot were darting with the breeze through the rough blue ocean.

At midnight, when the fugitives had quitted the El Malachor, the men who had just come upon the middle watch were aroused by a sound on the waters.

It was a tempestuous night, and the moon, obscured by thick clouds, rendered it a somewhat difficult matter to discern the object which had attracted attention.

A heavy thunderstorm coming on, and the lightning playing among the rigging, at length revealed to the half blinded gazers their dread enemy, the Flying Dutchman.

Rotaldo, the commander, who at the moment came upon deck, ordered the pirates to fire into her.

The latter were so overcome with horror, that every shot struck far off the mark, and glanced from billow to billow.

The storm continued with unabated fury for some minutes, at the expiration of which time it partially cleared off.

Though it was extremely dark, Rotaldo insisted upon keeping up the chase of the mystic vessel.

Ever and anon the moon broke through the rifted clouds, and shed a wild glimmer on the pirate schooner as she swiftly cleft the seas.

As the buccaneer was following the phantom ship, she tacked and swept past so closely, that the crew of the pursuing vessel could distinguish the faces of those on board her opponent.

To the horror of one and all, they perceived the ghostly skipper in a halo of light, and by his side the dusky form of their leader, Paul Jones.

As the eagle wings her flight, so did the phantom ship seem to skim the turgid waters of the Pacific ocean.

Leaving her enemy far behind, she continues her cruise at a terrific pace.

Solemn mountains of waves, lifting their hoary heads to the skies, billows and rocks are seen, passed, left behind, and vanish as in a vision.

Motion is imperceptible; it is impetus—volition.

But yesterday, Paul Jones and his companion were treading the deck of the El Malachor; to-day, they are hugging a coast thousands of miles distant.

During the whole voyage they had laboured on in silence; for though the former marvelled greatly, there was something strange and incomprehensible about the unknown, that inspired awe and checked familiarity.

It was not until the waning moon on the ensuing night was nearing a level with the ebbing waters, that this mysterious being essayed to speak.

"You can advance," he exclaimed, addressing Paul Jones, with a gloomy demeanour.

"There is a sepulchral tone in your language which chills me, even as the blast of winter," replied the pirate. "The ember-like light of your eye fills my soul with horror, as does that of the snake which fascinates to destroy."

"Tempter," he continued, "let me fly! Are you not —?"

"Vanderdecken, the Flying Dutchman, who impiously swore in defiance of heaven to gain my point, though I beat about till the crack of doom. My oath was registered in thunder, and recorded for ever in flames of sulphurous fire! But this concerns not you in the present instance, who are somewhat ungrateful."

"How so?"

"Because I pity your forlorn condition, you liken me to the serpent."

"Forgive, and shew me," replied Paul Jones, "this wealth-strewn wreck."

"Of which for a time, you must become the sentinel, instead of Vanderdecken."

"Where is it?"

"Here, on the spot upon which you stand. The moon is now kissing the wave: it is at this period only that the wreck of the charmed ship can become visible to human eyes. Behold!"

Suddenly a thick mist enveloped the scene, and rocks and waters rose, discovering the half buried hull of a vessel.

The ropes of this ship appeared green with seaweed.

Her timbers much decayed.

The windows and lanterns of the same, consisting of painted and variegated glass, were shattered and broken.

Her crew, torpid as the insensible cliffs around them, lay about as if in the last convulsions of the drowned.

Everywhere, bales of merchandise, chests of gold and jewels met the eye, which, being lit by the moon half sunk into the waves, produced a picture of awe, amazement and wonder.

As if by enchantment, the dead seamen of the wreck became instinct with life.

Each had his bony finger on his lip as if to impress silence; an oath of which was extorted by Vanderdecken from Paul Jones, previous to the narration of his history.

The crew were a company of odd-looking personages, and dressed in a quaint outlandish fashion.

Some wore short doublets.

Others jermans, with long knives in their belts.

All of them carried appendant to the body enormous breeches of similar style to Vanderdecken himself.

They all had beards of various shapes and colours, and the whole group reminded one of an old Flemish painting.

"You shudder," said Vanderdecken to Paul Jones, after he had pledged himself to secrecy. "Are you cold? here are beams will warm you."

As he spoke, the phantom skipper opened a large

chest containing that precious metal for which men sell their souls—

Gold.

"Uncounted—this inexhaustible wealth—all shall be yours in exchange for one year of liberty."

"Liberty?"

"Yes, yours for mine—one short year of captivity for the wealth of Vanderdecken."

Paul Jones hesitated.

"Hear my story, then if you waver not in your resolve, we have agreed."

"I listen," replied the pirate.

"Many years ago, in the olden time, Vanderdecken and his devil crew were the terror of every sea."

"Never passed a day that these decks were not crimson with blood enforced by guilty violence."

"At length the bright star of my destiny set: tempest and wreck, and loss in battle ensued—mutiny next."

"The ingrates, who had shared alike my plunder and my crimes, as if I alone had been culpable, cried aloud that the misfortunes that pursued the ship were drawn down solely by the enormities of her captain."

"I was dragged down from my cabin," continued Vanderdecken, "and manacled in the dark hold, while they, in riot and demoniac exultation, returned to perish."

"Perish!" echoed the pirate.

"Yes; fearfully, terribly was Vanderdecken avenged," he cried. "As I lay in my prison, fettered, loudly descended to my ear the drunken sounds of mockery and defiance."

"The rage—the strength of superhuman force possessed me."

"I burst assunder my iron bonds, and reaching a porthole of this devoted vessel, snapped, as though it were a frail thread, the chain that held it."

"In furiously gushed the booming waters."

"Deeper and deeper down, with every roar, the ship descended."

"I cared not for myself. To die avenged was all—avenged, and like Vanderdecken."

"From thence your doom—

"To watch the fearful wreck one year in a century, and at one especial hour of the night to encounter the re-animated forms of those I murdered."

"And must I endure all this?" asked Paul Jones.

"Not endure, but witness in my stead, one hour at the set of moon for gold," returned Vanderdecken.

"You are innocent of the blood I have spilt," he continued; "the curses of the doomed will flow harmlessly back, as sea-foam from a rock of iron."

"If I refuse?"

"It is too late to retreat," shouted Vanderdecken. "The moon is already on a level with the waters."

"A desperate zeal inspires me," muttered Paul Jones. "The excitement which conducts to hope, is better than a nothingness worse than death."

The phantom skipper laughed bitterly.

"You have no power over me, demon," cried the pirate with a shudder.

"Indeed; then you reject my offer to you?"

"I reject an offer which delivers me to perdition. Remember it is never too late to repent and atone for past evil."

"An idle fear," rejoined Vanderdecken. "I care not for your soul—you will forfeit that without my aid. I have need of you, and—"

"I will not consent to join you in this unholy compact."

"Then I must compel you."

"You dare not touch me."

A derisive smile was the answer of Vanderdecken.

"I am armed with a relic—the holy cross upon which you made your impious vow."

With the words, Paul Jones drew the sacred em-

blem of Christianity from his breast. It was no sooner exposed to view than the heavens darkened, and forked flashes of lightning burst through her sable mantle.

The crew of the charmed vessel again aroused from torpor, became endowed with the appearance of life.

The waters changed their hue, the old lanterns lit dimly up, and the wreck assumed its pristine semblance, as these livid spectres advanced on all sides.

With brutal ferocity they stabbed their invulnerable commander, who, with fierce mocking, defied their deeply-dealt blows.

They flashed their fire-arms at him, but still no sound prevailed.

While liquid flames hovered o'er his head, and once more pronounced his dreadful doom.

A foretaste of death seemed to pass over the face of Paul Jones with a marble paleness, and thick drops of sweat gathered on his brow at the ghastly encounter.

Protected by the holy cross which he still held in his possession, he gradually recovered from his terror, and, in defiance of the supernatural band, plunged from the vessel's side into the surrounding sea.

Engulfed in the waters, his senses were overpowered, his eyes swam in his head, and he remembered nothing till he found himself peacefully reclining in his own cabin.

"Thank heaven, then, it was a dream," he cried, joyfully, "and not sad reality."

CHAPTER V.

HANS A PRISONER—THE LASH—A DARING EXPLOIT—THE ANACONDA.

The sea is like a mirror.

The breeze caresses the sails of the El Malachor as she speeds on her course.

The sun gilds the ropes.

Her daring crew, basking in the beams of day, form an assemblage of light repose, and harmony.

Who could see, in those hardy mariners and around them, the prelude of a terrible and unlooked-for event.

Human life and its contrasts form one eternal sarcasm.

A flash of lightning, and the waves will roar.

A word; a blow, and blood will quickly follow.

No matter; a bold and venturesome life suits both the inclination and finances of the buccaneer, and he has enrolled himself under the dreaded black flag.

The perfidious ocean, which hides under its surface its monsters and its depths, has ever been the rover's model, and is so still.

It was his cradle; it will be his grave, perchance.

Let us now turn to the forecastle of the schooner, some hours later, and see what is going forward there.

Look, look! What are they bringing up now?

By Jove! there are all the hounds in the pirate pack.

A fine head of game, sure enough; bound, pinioned and corded,

The party, armed with drawn cutlasses, who surrounded the prisoner, were accompanied by the captain of the watch, Black Bill.

At the same time we may remark there was nothing about the unfortunate being in custody, save and except his deformity, which could warrant the display of glistening weapons that were pointed at him.

He was quiet, silent, sullen.

His only eye merely gave, occasionally, a glance of anger at the bonds which confined his person.

The sturdy Black Bill, as judge, having acquainted himself before hand with the conditions and supposed offences of the captive, was enabled to have in readiness replies to expected answers, and at once, in a magisterial tone, commenced his interrogation.

"Your name?"

Whether the addressed party was too much absorbed in his own thoughts to answer, did not appear; however, was it so or otherwise, he maintained silence, and looked steadfastly at the spokesman, who repeated his question.

"He is called, or rather calls himself, Hans Hinckman," cried several voices.

"Humph! It would be as well for him if he disclosed his own name—namely, that of the devil."

A roar of laughter burst from the audience—vehement, contagious, and universal.

Hans Hinckman merely turned about, and shrugged his broad and lusty shoulders with disdain.

"Now, your business?" said Black Bill, going on agreeably to the routine of persons in such a position as that which he now held.

The prisoner was silent as before.

"Hark ye!" exclaimed the judge; "if you do not reply to me, I will have such a peal rung on your back that you will not forget till the day of your death!"

"Tell me, and quickly," he continued, "how do you employ yourself?"

"Various ways," returned Hans Hinckman, with imperturbable coolness; "there are times when I bite my finger nails.

"Times when, for want of thought, I whistle a tune.

"Times when I read the stars."

"You hear, messmates," said Black Bill; "he acknowledges himself to be a magician."

"There may be mystery, but no magic in the skies," returned the prisoner. "If I peruse the starry scroll of heaven, it is to gather lore, by which I am enabled to avert the stroke of danger, or control the destiny otherwise allotted to man."

"That will do," said Black Bill, to the seamen around him, who began to whisper and look at one another.

"You are accused," continued he, turning to Hans Hinckman, "of sorcery, magic, and attempt to poison our captain, Paul Jones."

An angry roar followed this remark, mixed with cries from some of the pirates for summary justice.

"You had better tell all you know," cried Black Bill, "or I shall not be able to preserve you from the fury of my messmates."

"That I dare not do," replied Hans Hinckman, shaking his head; and then he added, firmly, "what is more, if I could, I would not."

The answer so infuriated the crowd, that, but for the interference of the judge, the previous threats which had been uttered by it would have been put into execution.

"Belay there!" he exclaimed; "though he deserves a halter, I won't let him swing till he has spoken out, and I think we have means of making him do so."

Upon the deck of the El Malachor was now placed a cube of wood-work some ten feet high, and hollow within.

A rude flight of steps led to an upper platform, upon which was seen a horizontal wheel constructed of oak.

To this wheel the culprit was at once bound, upon his knees, and with his hands tied behind him.

Jerkin and shirt were taken off, and Hans Hinckman allowed himself to be stripped to the waist without the least opposition.

An axle of timber, moved by a capstan, next caused the wheel to revolve, and exhibit the face of the pinioned wretch to every point of the compass.

This was called by the pirates "harnessing" a prisoner to the wheel.

A loud laugh was raised by those assembled when they beheld Hans Hickman's naked hump, his camel breast, and scaly shoulders.

Amidst all this mirth, a man of Herculean frame advanced.

It was Caesar, the black, whom we have already introduced to our readers.

He had bared his right arm by turning up the sleeve of his shirt to the elbow: over the left arm was seen hanging a whip.

This same was composed of long, white glistening thongs, knotted, twisted, and pointed with sharp bits of metal.

The negro had no sooner taken his stand beside the prisoner, than Black Bill stamped with his foot.

The wheel began to turn.

Hans Hinckman shook in his bonds.

The expression of his hideous face at this crisis, drew fresh shouts from the pirates who surrounded him.

All at once, when the wheel in its revolutions presented the shoulders of the culprit to Caesar, he raised his whip-armed hand.

The thin lashes hissed sharply in the air like so many wasps, and descended with fury upon the back of the unfortunate manikin.

He started like one awakened from a troubled dream.

He writhed and struggled.

A violent contraction of pain distorted the muscles of his face, but he heaved not a sigh nor uttered a murmur.

He merely turned his head one way and then the other, balancing it the while like some bull pierced in the flank by the weapon of a picador.

A second dull thud succeeded the first stroke, then came a third and another and another.

The wheel continued to turn, and the blows at its rotation to fall.

The blood began to flow from the swart and lacerated body of Hans Hinckman, and the thongs to sprinkle it in drops over the persons of his unpitiful and ruthless persecutors.

In defying his torture, the offender had not over-calculated his strength, but the agony he endured forced, at length, from him one of those shrieks which baffle the orthography of every human language.

"Hold," said Black Bill, signaling to the negro that he might cease his barbarous duty. "I thought we should be able to make this oracle open his mouth.

"Wizard," he continued, "do you persist in denying the charges laid against you, more especially that of conspiring against the life and welfare of our captain?"

"I am innocent," groaned Hans Hinckman, who now resembled a lump of quivering flesh rather than a living creature.

"You are still obdurate," said Black Bill, fiercely; "but I may yet be merciful if you explain the other impious charges that are alleged against you."

"I cannot."

"Do you deny them?"

"Everything; and torture shall fail to extort from me a confession."

"That we have yet to see," returned Black Bill, with a sardonic smile.

Again the wheel was set in motion.

Caesar, preparing to renew his labour, again took up his station near Hans Hinckman.

The dread of future punishment seemed to in-

cline the manikin now to throw off his former apathy.

He endeavoured at first quietly, and without any external effort, to break the cords with which he was secured.

His eye was then observed to flash with lurid fire.

His muscles and limbs swelled and gathered themselves up.

His bonds and chain began imperceptibly to stretch.

The struggle was evidently desperate, mighty, prodigious.

All of a sudden the shackles cracked.

Ferocity had given the dwarf the power of a giant.

The hempen lashings, which had eaten into his flesh, snapped like a piece of whipcord.

Taking advantage of the temporary amazement of his persecutors, Hans Hinckman managed to possess himself of the capstan bar, which had been inadvertently left within reach.

Black Bill was the first to recover from surprise, and drawing a huge hanger from his side, made a rapid cut at the offender.

The latter had foreseen the stroke, and averted it with his ponderous iron weapon.

Such was the force of the blow, that the sword-blade, though of the best-tempered steel, was shivered at the hilt.

Gnashing his teeth with rage, the vanquished seaman sought a new weapon, and encouraged, with shouts and cries, his messmates to press in a body on his antagonist.

Galled by the fierce and pertinacious assault, Hans Hinckman, with his powerful instrument of defence, raged among his foe like a wolf in a lamb pasture.

Fain would many have taken to their heels, but retreat was impossible.

Those behind pushed forward the ranks in front.

Shrieks and execrations evinced the devastation of the furious and relentless onslaught.

In a few moments the destruction of the pirate crew would have been complete, for they tottered and fell one after the other, from the blows dealt by the heavy capstan bar so skilfully handled by its possessor.

It was at a critical moment, when a cessation of hostilities took place, by a voice shrieking out from the hold—

"Fire-arms!"

Aware of his danger, the remarkable agility of Hans Hinckman stood him in admirable stead.

Disengaging his right arm, he clutched at a rope that hung suspended over his head from the foremast.

Though through his tremendous exertion he could scarcely even draw his breath, and his brawny chest heaved like a labouring mountain, he contrived to reach the crosstree with the agility of a startled cat, and here for a moment he was partially out of harm's way.

From this point, the manikin, looking down upon the maimed and wounded sufferers, appeared to their eyes as some avenging fiend, who had hurled a terrible and just retribution upon their tormented souls.

Hans Hinckman did not long remain in his perilous situation.

His quick eye had observed the carbines levelled at him, and instinct revealed to him the deadly aim of those who were poising them.

Springing forward without hesitation, he leapt from the dizzy eminence into the sea.

A demon laugh—a laugh such as one only who has ceased to be human is capable of, burst from Hans Hinckman as he struggled with the waves.

The pirates, with dark and louring faces, gathered

at the bulwarks, and their eager eyes strained themselves to watch whether their late captive gained or lost by his daring exploit.

For some minutes they gazed intently on him, and conversed in a somewhat low tone.

"How the lubber sails," said Hal Harpoon, emphatically. "For such a queer-looking craft it is wonderful!"

"No, Hal, there's nothing ship-shape about him," rejoined Brandy-nose Nick, with a dreamy consciousness, after a few hours' slumber induced by immoderate intoxication.

"He's just such a craft as they make at home by the cord, and cut off in lengths to order," resumed the tippler, moistening his clay with a swig at the brandy-flask he always carried about.

"But the devil," he continued, "who has fitted him out and signed his papers, could make a wash tub sail, I suppose."

"Ay, and go into the wind's eye like a flying fish," replied Fergus Blake. "If, as we suspect, he's one of the infernal crew of the Flying Dutchman, we shan't leave him hull down until after sunset."

"Look yonder," said Hal Harpoon; "there is a black mass on the surface of the waters."

At any other time the intimation would have occasioned either curiosity or apprehension; now it was forgotten in the danger which menaced the fugitive.

In the direction indicated could be seen the dark object sighted by the pirate, whose track, by the white mist wrenched from the ocean, was coming down to him with a wild, rushing sound.

All at once it reached Hans Hinckman.

The next instant both were lost sight of, and the minute after the sea, to use the terms of our social friend Nick, turned as red as a marine's jacket, and man and monster appeared again; the former darting away from the latter, like a wild bird loosed from the string.

To the surprise of all, Hans Hinckman made once more for the ship from which he had escaped, followed by his enemy, who was now distinguished as one of those gigantic animals tradition asserts at times frequents the deep.

The chase now appeared both awful and exciting.

The ocean became whitened, and resembled its aspect under a fierce hurricane, while boiling foam marked the region of pursuit.

The El Malachor, affected by the rolling billows, gave a plunge ever and anon, groaning like some animate being in the throbs of parting soul and body.

Hans Hinckman, as if endowed with supernatural power, seemed to increase the distance between himself and antagonist, and eventually succeeded in gaining the ship.

With outstretched neck, and eye starting from its socket, he contemplated the faces protruded over the bulwarks above his head.

There was, for the moment, something appalling in the silence which now ensued between the two parties.

Foaming with rage and undisguised terror, the wretched outcast on the wave became sensible that all else was useless, and mustered all remaining strength for his last and final effort.

Setting both his knees against the side of the vessel, Hans Hinckman hooked himself into one of her clefts, and, by superhuman exertion, succeeded in passing his body through one of the open port-holes.

Amazement and terror, which had hitherto compelled the pirates to maintain silence, now, at the desperate act, caused them with one accord to exclaim—

THE FROZEN CREW OF THE ICE-BOUND SHIP



THE VOW OF SILENCE.

"We are lost!—he will sink us!"

"No!" shouted Black Bill. "I can unearth the fox, though he had burrowed ten fathoms deep."

"This holy water," he continued, "which I took

from a priest we murdered on our last cruise, is a sure preservative against the machinations of this imp of Beelzebub; a few drops sprinkled on the deck will make the devil put his cloven feet again in motion."

With the words, the speaker, accompanied by several others, descended to a lower part of the ship.

Arriving in the hold, the foremost pirate was unable to preserve his equilibrium, by stumbling over something soft, which stirred and uttered a groan.

The light, having been held by the foremost man, was extinguished, and all being left in total darkness, added embarrassment to the previous discomfiture.

When Black Bill had recovered himself, his first demand was to know over whom he had floundered.

"He was a man an hour since," answered a hollow and broken voice.

It was that of Hans Hinckman.

"It is Lucifer's son, delivered again into our hands," cried the buccaneers.

"Down with him!"

"The stain of hell is on him!"

"Beat out his life, and trust no more to the waters which reject the spawn of Satan!"

While the pirates were congratulating themselves upon the prospect of destroying the agent of their arch enemy, they were startled by a horrible noise which resounded through the cabin in which they were standing.

A dull phosphorous light dispelled the intense gloom, and betrayed to view the monster which had attacked their prisoner in the waters of the ocean.

It was the dreaded anaconda, or sea serpent.

This terrible creature forced its way along the vaulted roof of the deep hold, and seemed prepared to dart upon the affrighted beholders, who threw themselves upon their faces before it.

But their terror was soon mitigated.

On raising their heads, they observed that the anger of the intruder was directed solely against Hans Hinckman, upon whom it rushed, and with whom it rose into the air in spite of the wild shrieks which escaped from the victim.

CHAPTER VI.

THE LULL BEFORE THE STORM.

The disappearance of Hans Hinckman was followed by a dark and tempestuous night.

The El Malachor stoutly breasted the angry waters that threatened every moment to break over her in resistless force.

The crew, though suffering under superstition, were at their posts preparing for every peril that might threaten them.

Since the storm had commenced, they had succeeded in taking in the lighter sails of the vessel, and sending down the lofty spars, and she was now ploughing the sea with close-reefed fore and main-top-sails.

Her commander, Paul Jones, rising from a sick couch, issued his orders with coolness and deliberation.

He saw there was danger to be apprehended while the ship laboured hard.

There was considerable water in her hold, and not the slightest indication observable of the abatement of the hurricane blowing.

At length an enormous wave stole over the bows of the bark, and swept everything moveable from the deck.

In another moment the El Malachor was thrown upon her beam ends.

The buccaneers clung to the rigging, as if making the last effort for life.

Paul Jones, whose mind was more vigorous than

his body, shouted to his followers to cut away all the masts.

The order not being readily obeyed, he contrived, (ill as he was) by making fast a rope around his body, to prevent his being washed overboard, to reach and fell the mainmast.

The schooner immediately righted, but was as yet fearfully careening over the billows at the mercy of the tempest, while a deep despair was marked plainly in the visages of many of her crew.

One of these had possessed himself of a keg of rum, and, with an air of distraction and awe, dealt it out indiscriminately to those around him, as he pretended, to alleviate the horrors of their situation.

The pirate chieftain, with his usual presence of mind, ran forward, and, with the axe which he still held in his hand, knocked in the head of the vessel containing the maddening poison.

This act enraged those who had taken a draught of its contents, and a sudden mutiny, amid all the horrors on board the ill-fated ship, was the immediate consequence.

Paul Jones for a time maintained his authority, and, supported by the principal part of the crew, who, either from fear, or some other cause remained faithful to him, quelled into subordination and clapped into irons those who were still refractory.

Some days of gentle breezes and favourable winds wore off the effects of the late disasters, and, if not forgotten, were referred to with jest or indifference.

The commander had improved in health and spirits, the El Malachor had run through the southern main, and was now veering by the captain's orders in a northerly direction.

The good ship, anon, at her anchors lay, bearding the leaping waves of the restless sea that washes eventually the shores of icy regions, and basked beneath the sun of a Polar's summer's day, which, though shining cold and clear, nevertheless shone lovelily.

Though nothing but the ocean, winking in the day-beams like a drowsy lion, and fleeting clouds, emblems of our own quick passage to eternity, were to be seen, the mariner knew that he was drifting on the confines of the Arctic latitudes, and that a single degree would reveal to him a still, deep solitude and a wide scene of desolation.

Would he turn back, or face the dreary lands and seas?

Here, wonders would he find.

The waters are all enchanted, haunted is the ground, and wizards live upon the shore; while in ocean caves, where fathom-line hath never found the depths, monsters and mermen make their dark and dreadful laws.

There stands the sable Rock of Death, a large black mountain, which travellers assert is situate under the Pole, where are four terrible whirlpools, and there dwells the dreaded kracken, and the equally horrible marine animal the anaconda, with which our readers have been already acquainted.

The coolness and determination of Paul Jones, which had ever awed his followers, now compelled them to acquiesce in his resolve to prosecute his journey to the tract we have pictured.

To sail upon the midnight flood by Lapland's magic coast, and encamp on the ice fields of the frozen sea.

Merrily glides the pirate's schooner on her course, once more rigged and fitted out, as her stern commander encourages drooping hearts with some such words as these—

"Cheerily, messmates, cheerily! The wind is still, the main calm. Ye that love wild adventures will behold on our cruise scenes that men doubt can

be revealed to mortal eyes, or deem them the offspring of superstition.

"If we succeed in our enterprise, which for the present must remain a secret," he continued, "future ages will honour us as heroes, rather than despise us as pirates, while our immediate reward will be incalculable and everlasting."

The exhortations of Paul Jones animated the crew, and were strengthened by a discovery that an extraordinary shoal of fish was nearing the vessel.

"Cast out your nets from the shallop's side," cried the pirate, "while I take my stand at the bowsprit."

"Bring me a spear," he added, "that I may launch its force on our slippery prey, should they attempt to burst from our tackle."

The weapon was brought and placed in his hand, while he continued to address those around him, who seemed to ask by their looks the motive for so singular a request.

Paul Jones soon satisfied curiosity, by giving his observers to understand that his service was necessary and one of danger, and he was bound to show an example to others by a cheerful and ready obedience to commands unconditional.

"Mariners say," he remarked, "that many a monster slumbers beneath these arctic depths, although I, who have trod the deck from childhood, must confess I have never beheld a sight which could appal me. Be that as it may, if there be aught in these strange waters that may strange features show to man, that being I challenge and its terrors I defy, be it fearful or beautiful, fair or loathsome!"

"And now, by this token I cast in the waves,
I woo me a bride from these fathomless caves;
And be she but fair, by the heavens above,
I will love her as well as a mortal can love."

As Paul Jones ceased to speak, to the wonder and amazement of the pirate crew, he threw the spear he had asked for into the sparkling main below him.

He had no sooner done so, than a scream of agony pierced the air, and a sight, never to be forgotten, followed that which now appeared to all an impious deed.

The waves literally bled; for their azure and briny face at once was crimsoned over with streaming blood, which, flowing around the buccaneers' bark, swam her on a gory and sanguine sea.

The pirates who witnessed this hideous spectacle were for the moment too terrified to offer any remonstrance, while their chief, who glanced at the pale features around him, mocked at the ominous token and laughed at their fears, exclaiming—

"Fools! 'tis but the blood of a Northern whale! You are stout seamen, truly, to tremble at that which should frighten only young maids and children!"

"Captain," returned Black Bill, who seemed to be the first to recover from the general trepidation, "no whale's blood could tinge old Neptune's realm with such a vast hue; and if we are for ever to pass signals with the Flying Dutchman, whom I suspect is again hatching mischief for us in these latitudes, I shall wish for a short turn of rope and a leap from the yard-arm."

"The time was," returned the pirate chieftain, "when the crew of Paul Jones knew danger only as a word. Blood and flood has assailed us, without the chance of staying either, yet no man's heart failed him."

"But a truce to this," continued the speaker. "I am your captain, and a mortal like yourselves, and my assistance may avail you in the present strait,

if you are not too proud, as well as craven, to be counselled."

Heap upon seamen every disaster, such as the wind, the elements, or the enemy, and they will bear up against them with a courage amounting to heroism, provided there is a plank between them and death; but let them learn (for they are all superstitious) that they are battling with the arch foe of the human race, and at once they lose confidence and energy, while, at the same time, they become paralysed, subdued, and beyond the power of every control.

Such feelings had now taken possession of many of those on board the El Malachor, deeming her captain as one supernatural they set at nought that influence which he had hitherto commanded by resolution and fortitude.

Apprehension and awe were so deeply rooted in their breast that, despite the threats and jests of the skipper, not one of his crew, when they beheld the decline of day, would remain on deck.

While they vowed in secret through that night that should the vessel sink or swim, no man in the vessel should keep the lonely watch, which to add to the general misgiving, Paul Jones had thoughtlessly imposed upon himself.

Gloomily the clouds gathered, as the captain trod the deck alone.

Unlike the night of a north-polar sea, neither a star nor a moonbeam appeared in the heavens where, during its brief summer, the silvery sun seldom fades and, even at the hours of southern darkness, gleams as brightly as he gleams in opening day.

It was in the midwatch that Paul Jones beheld, not without vivid interest, a shadowy form rise as it were from the tide.

She appeared a female of unspeakable beauty, with eyes dark as the gazelle's, and features that might have enchain'd an anchorite.

Around her a pallid blue radiance was beaming, and in the halo of light could clearly be distinguished the presence of some spirit that had emerged from the mighty deep.

Her sea-coloured mantle was streaming with the ocean.

Her right hand held the very spear which the pirate chief had cast into the waters, to the dismay of his followers, and who were now forgetting their vain terrors in sleep.

Paul Jones gazed on the apparition in wonder but without fear, as it ascended the vessel and stood by his side in a motionless posture.

For some moments he remained in mute astonishment, and at length murmured forth the interrogation—

"Who art thou?"

"A friend," replied the figure, in accents that rang upon the pirate's ear like music.

"Are you a spirit?" he demanded.

"It matters not. I am a friend," rejoined the figure.

"On what errand do you come here?" asked Paul Jones.

"To save you," answered the figure. "Your life is menaced by those who should favour you—you shall go hence with me if you choose."

"On what condition?"

"We will speak of that when we are out of the vessel," returned the figure, who continued to address the pirate thus—

"By this spear and token, I bring from the sea
My love, thou must know I am wedded to thee,
That shriek was the answer I gave thy demand
My blood was the sign I accepted thy hand,
For to me didst thou swear, by the heavens above,
Thou wouldest love as well as a mortal can love,

And now from those deeps where the coral is growing,
Whose silvery streams round my grottoes are flowing,
I came to conduct thee, those vows to renew,
Where eternity's joys are all hoarded for you.
So come to the ocean and with me descend,
And share in my fortune till time hath an end."

Feeling there was sorcery blent with the song of the temptress, who had artfully twined her scarf around Paul Jones while chanting her mystical spell, he recoiled from her embrace, and finally determined to reject her proffer, be the hazard what it might.

"No," he cried; "evil though I be, I will not league myself to one who bends the knee to the powers of darkness."

"Providence," continued the pirate, "has sent you to me as a warning, and from this moment Paul Jones renounces his former life, and will confide only on one who, alike on shore and ocean, is ever nigh."

"You have already given yourself up to me."

"A rash vow will never deliver the truly penitent to perdition."

"You must go with me," said the spirit, "deep and deeper yet, even where the purple waters rill, where the ocean world is set a thousand fathoms below the surface of the main."

Paul Jones heard no more; he felt himself sinking, and a hot breath was upon his face, as he clutched the crucifix from his breast to aid him in invocation to the supreme being in the extremity.

Whether the holy relic acted as a charm or not he could never tell, but of a surety from the moment he raised it, he passed, as it were, into a pleasing reverie, and remembered nothing till he found himself, some hours after, reclining in his cabin, watched by the faithful and vigilant Gonzalvi.

"It is now necessary to recount the events following upon the late mysterious encounter.

Paul Jones had been found by the crew, on the following day, lying upon the deck, covered with blood, and to all appearance dead.

This circumstance was at once attributed by them to the fiend, whom they supposed had ensnared their captain, and not to the real cause, a breaking open afresh the wound he had lately received.

It was first decided, living or dead, to throw the body overboard, but on a further consideration it was deemed a more prudent plan to let it remain, in fear of offending their supernatural enemy, who, had he so willed, would have buried it in the waters himself.

The inanimate form of Paul Jones was no sooner conveyed to a cabin than Rotaldo, for a second time, took command, and, with the consent of one and all, altered the course of the vessel by taking a southerly instead of a northerly tack.

This action seemed to bring a judgment upon the conduct of the men who had so cruelly deserted their commander, for they had hardly proceeded on their way two hours when the tempest of the previous day returned with two-fold fury, and they were compelled for safety literally to dismantle the ship.

This state of things served as a signal and led to greater evils.

An inordinate drinking bout ensued, ending in riot, quarrelling and bloodshed.

The noble vessel was left for a time under no guidance, and tossed about, having lost both rudder and compass, floated whither no one could tell.

It was a miracle that she outlived the night and was not engulfed in the raging deep.

Morning again dawned, and with it came calm and tranquillity.

The winds and the waves were nearly hushed.

The El Malachor glided lazily along without a spar

standing, while the pirates, becoming sobered, began to reflect upon their late and present dangers.

There was one among these desperate men who had not participated in the orgies, that one was Rotaldo.

It was he who had distributed the draught.

He had slept 'tis true, but not soundly; his head had been at work, and as he awoke and encountered the fearful and wild looks of the mutineers, a fiendish laugh of triumph broke from his lips.

"Ha, ha! By the cinders of Saint Anthony," cried the Spaniard, "your faces, messmates, bear such a rueful aspect that you might well set them to frighten crows from a corn-field."

"Your lingo, Rotaldo, is like a reefer's orders," replied Black Bill—"big words on a weak stomach. Come, bear a hand, and confess that things are looking ugly with us."

"With us, I grant you," replied Rotaldo, hastily, "as regards our captain, I begin to suspect the case is different."

"I see the point you are veering to, Rotaldo—the last order the skipper gave, seeing to—"

"Orders," echoed the Spaniard, laughing; "you and all the others are mean enough to do anything he commands. Did he order you to lay along the lee scuppers on a squally night that he might walk without wetting his tender feet, the paltry souls on board this vessel would gladly obey his orders."

"It's no use badgering or boxing the compass," said Black Bill. "Paul Jones has ever appeared less anxious for his own life than ours, and risked peril himself without suffering the crew to share it with him. Only look how he cut away the mainmast when not a soul would dare to —"

"Ah, that's all very well for you to think so," replied Rotaldo, with an undisguised air of contempt.

"I know more than I like to say."

"Avast! What do you suspect?"

"Umph—ha!"

"None of your hums and ha's—speak out."

"I will do so if you have patience to listen to a slight preliminary," said Rotaldo. "When this Vanderdecken we have lately encountered defied the Almighty's will in his rage, he was vonchased a chance of mitigating his doom through an appeal to men who had been guilty of crime and over whom he could exercise a power compelling them to suffer for a time the penalty inflicted on himself. The destiny of Paul Jones was accomplished; leaguing himself with the arch fiend is a matter full of danger and treachery."

"Danger, I grant," was Black Bill's answer, "but if I never take in another top sail can I see the treachery, if the captain as you say is determined to sail to Davey Jones in a devil's craft he must keep his own look out, and —"

"How dull you are," cried Rotaldo, casting a glance to see that no one overheard him, then looking at his companion with his iron visage contorted into a smile continued,

"With treasures of our ship and ourselves for hostages to the Flying Dutchman, he procures his safety and our ruin, in a word the destruction of the band."

"If I thought that," interrupted Black Bill.

"Say that you'll uphold me and I'll prove that I'm not cojoling you," exclaimed Rotaldo, "and in reward for confidence will steer our barque to a land whose emerald turf covers a mine of wealth."

"But the crew," returned Black Bill, "will they listen to us, think you; mastiffs are a faithful race and their master has won their love by a seaman's sheet anchor, true courage, though they believe with you he has had dealings with old Scratch."

"They will leave him to a man when they know

what good fortune I have in store for them," returned the Spaniard. "Our comrades have only to entrust the El Malachor into my hands for a month and the pieces in their pockets will outnumber the shells in the ocean."

"Besides," continued Rotaldo, "since his late disaster our commander has turned a doating driveller."

"When he takes up such a character, it were as well he laid down that of a pirate."

"Free rovers are not to be ruled by a spell bound and wayward tyrant."

"At least they do not profit by it," argued Black Bill, whose cupidity and superstition were raised to the highest pitch by his companion's wily remarks.

"Then turn the hands up," said Rotaldo, "let the crew assemble aft, and see if they will be bound equally as yourself to mantain me in an enterprise, which brings them only advantage."

"Some few may hesitate."

"If the others are favourable to my views, let these fools murmur aught of discontent and I'll find ready means to crush opposition and enforce obedience."

When we are delivered from great and serious dangers, our mood is or ought to be grave in proportion to the peril we have escaped and gratitude due to protecting providence.

But few things raise the spirits more naturally or more harmlessly, than when means of extrication from any of the lesser embarrassments of life are suddenly presented to us.

And such was the case in the present instance with the designing Spaniard, relieved from apprehensions, which his plan involved in some measure he spurred on his confidant to complete a matter which now appeared one entirely of his own free choice.

CHAPTER VII.

A FLAME OF DISCORD SPREADS AMONG THE PIRATE CREW.—SPIES ON BOARD.

Black Bill found little difficulty in lighting the fire of discord among the band, but left the arch conspirator, Rotaldo, to fan it to a flame.

"Patience, messmates, patience," cried the former, restraining a part of the crew who had listened eagerly to his recital, "our deliverer will accomplish all I have promised in his name."

"When will this finish?"

"Let the master hand guide the wheel, and wait for his signal."

"We shall be ready."

"I am counting for you."

"Listen, Black Bill," said Hal Harpoon, beginning to doubt whether he and the rest had not been too hasty in deserting Paul Jones, who, despite appearances, was admired by the crew. "The tale you tell us about the fields and rivers of gold is very pleasant and my ears tingle with the recollection of it, but if it were true—"

"It is true," interrupted Black Bill, "why what the foul fiend is the matter with you? Do you suppose I intend to grab the ship for a mere pastime?"

"No, Black Bill, we don't doubt your honesty of purpose, but can hardly realise a shower that by holding out our caps we may fill them with falling golden dollars."

The individual who had uttered these words was one rejoicing in the somewhat unmelodious name of Nipcheese whose stupidity allowed him a license and

whose remark was construed only as a joke by the party to whom it was addressed.

"Look before you—look earnestly!" continued Black Bill, pointing to the vast expanse of water that met the eye on every side. "Do you see land?"

"No," replied Nipcheese.

"Suppose, then, that you saw it."

"Well?"

"Suppose, still more, that upon that shore there are mountains of sovereigns."

"Well?"

"What would you do?" asked the imperturbable Black Bill, of the equally imperturbable and stolid Nipcheese.

"I would go and fill my pockets with them, and retire into private life, like many a rogue before me," he replied, with a significant nod, followed by a contemplation as to what sort of a figure he would cut under such very desirable circumstances.

"That's natural enough," resumed the other. "If the captain objected to it, and commanded that our ship should be steered in an opposite course, what would you do?"

The pirates were hesitating, when a voice offered a response—

"I don't know what Nipcheese would do, but the rest of the crew would obey orders to a man—they would remain at their posts, and not a single seaman turn traitor to Paul Jones, who deserves their loyalty."

Our readers will no doubt recognise in these sentiments those of Brandy-nose Nick.

The toper had been taking a siesta, or afternoon nap in close proximity to the pirates, and had thus unintentionally become acquainted with their conversation.

"What devil has conveyed you here?" cried Black Bill, startled at the sudden and unceremonious intrusion.

"No devil at all," replied Nick. "I came hither of my own accord, to couch in yonder hammock, but the devil a wink of sleep could I get for your infernal jawing-tackle. But, bad as things may seem, my heart is never so low in the hold but the smallest drop of comfort can bring it up again," continued the speaker, moistening his clay with a draught from his favourite bottle.

"Since you have overheard what has passed," said Black Bill, "tell us what you think of our project."

"Well, as far as I can judge," replied the seaman, with that air peculiar to drunken gravity, "I must say, though I don't assert it for a fact, that I see no end to this plotting, save that it will put the skipper on his guard."

"Ah! would you dare—"

"I tell you what, Black Bill," continued Nick, in a vain attempt to look sober. "It's lucky for you I have not taken my usual medicum this morning, or I should tell you—"

"What?"

"Why, I should tell you that you are turning the brains of our shipmates with your treacherous histories—that you are decoying the crew into the devil's service—that you are a rascal, a robber, a blackguard, a good-for-nothing—"

"Cut that fellow's cable, and leave his sheet anchor five fathom and a half in the billows," cried out Rotaldo, who, unseen, had advanced to the spot.

The words were scarcely uttered, when poor Nick found himself a prisoner, manacled, and in the keeping of the negro, Caesar, for whom he entertained a most admired aversion.

"Well," he cried, maintaining his usual non-

chalance, "fortune may be a pretty purser, but whenever there's an allowance of good luck to be served out aloft, she always takes care to keep me in the cockpit."

Whether it was that Rotaldo read his ill-affected uneasiness, or detected his secret resolution, is immaterial; but however it might be, a stern and scrutinising glance made the hitherto bold captive tremble.

"It is useless to trifle with me," cried the Spaniard, turning from the pirates he had been whispering to, and suddenly facing Nick. "You are a traitor to us!"

The addressed was too much agitated to offer a remark.

"Tell me, if you would save your hide from the lash and your carcase from the wave, for what purpose you concealed yourself in this place?"

Nick was still silent, and Rotaldo continued—

"Basta! you will find me as good as my word, and if you do not answer, your life will assuredly pay the penalty of your rashness!"

The toper, ashamed of his late weakness, braced main and topsails, and bore down on the enemy, as he called it, by announcing that he knew nothing of the matter in question.

"You are a spy," cried the Spaniard; "but, still continue ignorant of your errand, and it in the end will gain nothing by your treachery."

"You are wrong there, my heart," replied Nick, with courage, and the quality next in value to it, self-possession. "I have discovered the existence of a conspiracy, and the name of its principal."

"Ha-ha! I thought we should worm the secret out of the sot."

"I've only to put ship about, pop upon the skulking squadron in the wind's eye, and you all dangle from the rigging before seven bells to-morrow morning."

"Well, sirrah—well, sirrah," replied Rotaldo with visible calmness.

"But I am not such a loblolly boy as to peach to Paul Jones, who appears to me to be no more bewitched than the rest of the crew," continued Nick. "If I am—"

"Paid for silence, eh?" added Rotaldo, with a grim smile.

"Precisely," replied his associate. "You are in my power, and I am in duty bound to make the most of my position, and to fight to the last drop of my—"

"Bottle," he would have said, but finding the vessel empty, replaced the same in the pocket from which he had taken it, and obtained consolation in a long-drawn sigh.

"Umph!" said Rotaldo, looking fixedly at Nick. "It was my first intention to hang you from the mast head, as a warning to those who might have qualms about our present venture; but I since find I may have reasons for employing you, and will also make it worth your while to be faithful to me, and I shall spare you such a fate."

"For the present, however," continued the Spaniard, "you must remain under arrest, and when I require your service I will send for you. Remember, while you are a prisoner, should you attempt to play me false, no power on earth shall save you from my vengeance; while if you are true, money and friendship shall reward you."

With these words, Nick was conveyed to a cabin beneath the deck, and Rotaldo was left in company with Black Bill, whom he addressed when they were alone.

"There are none now averse to our scheme?"

"None," answered Black Bill.

"Then we have ensured success?"

"I hope, Senor Rotaldo, you are satisfied with my efforts," continued the other buccaneer, "for I have worked hard, and have had a great deal of trouble with our messmates, who have dull heads and tender consciences, though they be only pirates."

"You shall be rewarded as you deserve depend upon it," replied the Spaniard, who shrewdly guessed his companion's drift, "and if fortune stands our friend, we need pursue her wheel no further at sea, but set ourselves down with contentment for the rest of our days in the peaceful groves of the banana and palmettoe."

"I don't presume to advise, Senor Rotaldo," said Black Bill, fawningly, "but you know our destination is not yet known to the captain, who seems to bear a charmed life if we may judge from his recovery from what appeared to us last night but death, and the crew are impatient to put into practice your project."

"I am now going to his cabin," returned the Spaniard. "He must yield to us or proclaim a successor."

"There is but one, he dare to name!"

"And once pronounced his heir, Paul Jones, shall find Rotaldo will not tardily await the enjoyment of the power already dropping from his doating hand."

The speaker stopped short in his discourse, and after a moment's scrutiny of his companion's countenance, found he had not mistaken the person to whom he had opened his plan.

"There is one thing yet to guard against," continued the Spaniard. "The boy Gonzalvi—is he safe?"

"Safe as bolts and bars can make him."

"Where is he confined?"

"In the lazaretto; he is unshackled, but the locks of his prison are strong."

"He still believes you his friend."

"Yes, he readily believed the tale I trumped up, that his capture was only a ruse to deceive you."

"What do you propose?"

"Why the sooner Gonzalvi is silenced the better," said Black Bill, "if he should for a moment entertain a doubt of my sincerity he will give us trouble."

"And the papers?"

"Are still in his possession instead of ours, a matter most essential to—"

"Visit him at once," interrupted Rotaldo, "while I sound Paul Jones on our present enterprise. Should the boy refuse to yield the documents, you know how to act?"

Black Bill nodded assent, and with a grim smile, parted company with the Spaniard.

Crossing the deck, he descended the hatchway, and entered the lazaretto in which Gonzalvi was incarcerated.

The youth had been treated with great consideration by Black Bill, who hoped to carry out his point more successfully by artifice than severity.

When the gaoler entered he was pacing to and fro within his prison in great excitement, but agitation ceased on seeing Bill, whom he addressed in hasty accents—

"You bring me liberty!"

"Not now," returned Black Bill; "in fact, at the present moment it would be dangerous to effect it."

"But make your mind easy," continued the speaker, "seating himself at a table beside Gonzalvi, "your detention will be of short duration."

"If you are deceiving me," cried Gonzalvi, furiously, "you will rue it. If I am not free within an hour I will fire the ship."

A significant glance passed between the gaoler and his prisoner, as the former calmly remarked—

"I will set you free within a minute, if——"

Black Bill paused, then continued slowly, first observing that his words were not overheard—

"You have papers concealed about you?"

"I will never part with them."

"I knew you would not," said Bill, disguising successfully his purpose. "Had you have consented to give them up, I should have known that there was no faith in you; as it is, I find I may with safety trust you."

"Yet you must own my suspicion is not altogether unjust," replied Gonzalvi, who was not quite satisfied by his companion's admission, "although you've explained to me the reason why I am brought to this dungeon, and I have no proof, but a bare word, for your fidelity."

"Rest content that I am your friend, though appearances may be against me," replied Black Bill, with calmness. "Circumstances, over which I have no control, compel me to act as I do."

"I have solemnly promised no harm shall befall you from the rest of the crew," he continued, "and before long you will be delivered from your enemies."

"But you do not say that you yourself have no design against me," said Gonzalvi, naively, whose quick intellect could catch ideas at a glance.

Black Bill answered the question put to him by evasively remarking—

"What motive could I have in visiting you, if it were not to give you assurance of my friendship?"

"If I thought so," replied the youth, "I could bear my confinement, and wait with patience its issue."

"You may do so; but come, no longer despond. You have fasted some hours, and shall have the best fare the ship affords, with nature's best sauce, a good appetite."

With this, the buccaneer spread a cloth of snow white linen on the cabin table, and placed some preserved fruit, bread and wine before Gonzalvi.

The youth having overcome his previous scruples, and being, to use his own words, as sharp-set as a shark, sat down to commence his meal, which he ate with avidity.

The pirate did not join him, but abruptly left the room with some trifling excuse, and was observed, every now and then, to peer through a chink into the chamber, as if watching the actions of its present occupant.

Gonzalvi, having satisfied his hunger, next quenched his thirst by swallowing half a tumbler of wine and water.

A sudden thought at this moment caused him to set the glass down upon the table.

He had no sooner done so, than he again put the vessel to his lips, took a fresh sip, and, rolling the fluid about in his mouth, spat the same on the cabin floor.

Why was it, the reader may ask, that Gonzalvi acted thus? Why was it that he had paused in the middle of his draught? What cause had he for setting down his glass with half its contents remaining in it?

It was suspicion.

Suspicion, winged as straight, and with the velocity of an arrow's head, into the very recesses of his soul.

The wine he was drinking had been drugged—poisoned, perhaps.

It was not long before an additional force was imparted to Gonzalvi's doubting.

His head felt light upon his shoulders.

There was a slight tingling in his hands and feet, which presently became cold as those of a shrouded corpse.

The blood rushed back to his forehead, with a bound that made his skin burn.

Every nerve and muscle in the frame of the sufferer was stretched to the utmost tension.

His deep breathing echoed fearfully in the surrounding repose.

Gonzalvi was in this strange state—perfectly conscious, but imperfectly able to control word, thought, or action, when he beheld Black Bill staring down at him, for he had fallen, as one overcome by excessive drinking.

He contemplated his prostrate victim, then coolly walked up to the table at which he had been seated and glanced at the bottle and glass which contained the hardly tasted wine.

"He has not drank much," he muttered, "but he has had enough for my purpose, and he will give me no further——"

Before he could finish the sentence Black Bill was kneeling by the side of Gonzalvi, and the ruffian's hand had reached his breast, where the coveted papers were deposited.

The wine he had drank having been taken in so small a quantity, and so profusely mixed with water, as may be supposed, had but imperfectly done its work, and with this impression the recipient hoped yet to baffle and deceive his adversary with such arguments as—

"Now or never.

"I will overcome this drowsiness which is setting upon me.

"I will not sleep.

"I will act.

"I will force my sinews to their task and escape."

Vain hope, the poor boy would have fared sorely but for a maladventure which happened to Black Bill at the moment he was about to snatch his prize from its covert.

As if by some preconcerted arrangement, the lamp suddenly went out, and left the cabin in a total and impenetrable darkness.

"Saint Peter's curse upon the wind, it has dowsed the glim," exclaimed Black Bill. "If I were superstitious I should imagine the devil was inclined to thwart me. Psba! let me rekindle the oil, and return to make sure of the papers I stand in need of."

The speaker had no sooner departed on his errand, than the party who had purposely extinguished the light made an appearance. It was none other than our friend, Brandy-nosed Nick.

How is it that we find that worthy, whom we have left pining in durance vile, now steering with a full sail and fair wind into the harbour of liberty.

A few short words will explain, or in nautical lingo, spin the yarn.

Nick had been placed in fetters, but his keepers had inadvertently placed within his reach the key which unlocked the incommodious iron.

His eagle eyes had detected at once the oversight, and he was too good a seaman to anchor among shoals and quicksands, when he might put out to sea with safety.

He was no sooner left to himself, than his chains dropped from his hands, and he was rid of one impediment to meet another.

This came in the shape of a stout bar of iron that secured his dungeon's door, but by forcing his larboard fin, or left hand, through a crevice, which seemed providentially to have presented itself to his view, he was enabled to remove this obstacle with as little difficulty as he had surmounted his previous one.

He was now free to tack and tack with the gale, and eventually, without being reconnoitred, to bear down on the lazaretto, from whence he had learned

what had passed between Gonzalvi and his treacherous associate.

How Nick acted under the circumstances has partly been shown—how he followed up his advantage remains to be told.

"Cheerily, my hearty," he exclaimed, bending over the prostrate youth. "the ship may strike but not go to pieces, if you use good seamanship."

"Square the yards—bouse all taut, and we shan't have to strike our colours."

"We'll weather the storm, if we sail under bare poles."

"Ah, Nick, is that you?" said Gonzalvi, recognising the voice, and partially recovering from his stupor. "I am dying."

"Die be —" exclaimed Dick, finishing the sentence with a whistle instead of an expletive.

"Poison has been administered to me."

"Yes, but you've destroyed its pernicious qualities by infusing it with so much water, a liquid for which, till now, I had the greatest contempt."

"If I desire," said the youth, feebly, "you will do me a service."

"Whether you desire it or not, I intend to do you a service," was the other's ready reply.

"I have about me papers of the utmost value to our commander. Of this my enemy is aware, and when he returns will doubtless search—"

"And not find them."

"How so?"

"Because I intend to deliver them to Paul Jones myself."

"They are not yet in your hands."

"But they soon will be," answered Nick; "unless you prefer entrusting them to the keeping of those who would not, perhaps, prove so faithful a messenger as myself."

"You have guessed my intentions. I shall let you take charge of these writings, and obtain your promise that they will be given up to him who has a right to peruse them."

Gonzalvi, who spoke in weak and faltering accents, then drew from his bosom a small packet, and offered it to his companion, who eagerly received the proffer.

"Hush," continued the youth, "footsteps are approaching. You must endeavour to conceal yourself till the danger be past."

"I shall never cry quarter while I've a shot in the locker," replied Nick—an expression he invariably used when his grog store was running low and he found means of replenishing it, which he now achieved by substituting his empty bottle for one on the table well filled.

There was no deleterious drug in this beverage that he could distinguish by the smell, or rather taste, for the tippler had never been able to get a vessel higher than his mouth when its destiny was assigned to his nose.

Pressing his new companion with the fervour of friendship to his bosom, Nick contrived to grope his way in the dark to an old sea-chest, which for the present must take him in tow, high, dry, and water-logged.

He had scarcely turned into this hammock, and ensconced himself in his hiding-place, than Black Bi'l again made his appearance in the cabin.

He bore with him a light, which he shaded from the currents of air with his hand.

CHAPTER VIII.

CAST ADRIFT.

Our wandering narrative must now return to Paul Jones, once more rescued from a perilous position, and in the situation of a convalescent, pale, indeed, and feeble from the loss of so much blood.

The great effusion had stopped, and his wound well-nigh healed, so efficacious were the vulnerary plants and salves with which it had been treated by the faithful and sage attendant, the youth, Gonzalvi.

The pirate chieftain was now seated by the stove in his cabin, having a book in his hand, marked with cabalistic characters.

This he looked upon from time to time, with signs of impatience, if not of ennui.

Feelings, at length, so far overcame the student, that, flinging the volume on the table, he fixed his eyes on the fire, and assumed the attitude of one who is engaged in unpleasant meditation.

After a pause, with folded arms and downcast looks, Paul Jones rose from his seat, and paced slowly his cabin.

Here the vivacity of his step and the fire of his eye betrayed themselves to be lost, while his whole appearance more than ever indicated melancholy of mind and suffering of body.

As the pirate chieftain walked to and fro, Rotaldo presented himself.

The former merely nodded a recognition, and, pulling his hat still deeper over his brows, resumed his solitary and discontented promenade.

The Spaniard adjusted his own hat, nodded in return, took snuff with the air of an old beau, from a richly-chased box, and offered it to his companion as he paced before him.

Being repulsed somewhat coldly, Rotaldo replaced the box in his pocket, folded his arms in his turn, and stood looking with fixed attention on his motions whose solitude he had interrupted.

Paul Jones at length suddenly stopped short, as if impatient at being longer the subject of observation, and demanded abruptly the reason of the intrusion.

"I am glad you spoke first," replied the Spaniard, calmly. "There was a report on deck that your late accident had proved fatal, and I was determined to know whether you were Paul Jones, or Paul's ghost."

"Ghosts, they say," continued Rotaldo, "never take the first word, so now I set it down for yourself in life and limb."

"Well, well, you must pardon me if I seem out of humour, for which, I assure you, I have good cause," answered the other, abruptly; "but as your jest is made, now let me have your earnest."

"I doubt if I am able to do so, without another can of grog, and the help of a right pipe of Trinidado."

"I am in no mood for drinking."

"Well, since you are unwilling, I am complaisant; and if it will oblige, will endeavour to inform you of matter on hand with dry lips."

The unusual freedom and levity of his opponent surprised and raised suspicions in the mind of Paul Jones, who, nevertheless, courteously listened to the following narrative:—

"I was born," commenced Rotaldo, "of Spanish parentage in the sunny climate of Mexico. My father and mother were poor country people, who believed, seriously, in the devil—passed a wretched life between prayers and work—between a barren land and a village cemetery, persuaded, in their simplicity, that misery led to happiness."

Paul Jones, making no comment on these facts,



TERRIFIC ATTACK OF THE DREAVED AND COND'D, OR SEA SERPENT.



TERRIFIC ATTACK OF THE DREADED ANACONDA, OR SEA SERPENT.

THE FROZEN CREW OF THE ICE BOUND SHIP



THE DWARF AND GONZALVIT SEPARATED FROM PAUL JONE.

with which he was already fully acquainted, the Spaniard, watching his features closely, continued, much in the same strain as before—

"How this monotonous and servile existence in-

spired me, still young, with disgust—how I tore off with my boyish hands the chrysalis in which I was stifled, to enable me to breathe the fresh air, I know not. I go my way without fear, troubling myself

little to know whether the wind that makes me advance comes from good or evil.

"Acknowledge, Paul Jones," he continued, "you little thought what a fatalist you had on board your vessel."

"Umph!" muttered the addressed. "I wonder what all this is coming to?"

Though he received no answer from his companion, Rotaldo could perceive that his attention was not otherwise engaged, and proceeded, after a pause, with his discourse.

"I had every ambition at once—luxury, power, pleasure. Later in life, what had been instinct became a calculation, and the man began to be able to give form to the fugitive schemes of the child."

The Spaniard, nothing daunted by the piercing glance Paul Jones darted upon him, resumed—

"I sold my little patrimony, and sailed for France. Once arrived in that fine country, I gave myself up to hard study. I concentrated on one single point all the energy of my intelligence and my education—all the resources of trickery and endurance that are in me. I had but one aim—to gain gold, and I will do it, though I wade knee-deep in blood!"

"Let me restrain myself, and see how far the audacity of this Spaniard will carry him," said Paul Jones to himself, with some difficulty affecting a composure he anything but felt.

"I interest you against your will," added Rotaldo, who had his own reason for desiring to increase the evident anger of Paul Jones, who no doubt looked upon the adventurer as a direct descendant of Cortez or Pizarro. "But to continue. You are a seaman, and must know that one of the constant efforts of Peter the Great was to attain America by the Kamtschatan sea."

"Truly so."

"After several fruitless voyages and insignificant adventures, a Russian captain at length landed on the coast of California, and disembarked six men. What became of them?"

"They were never found," returned Paul Jones. "Soft water failed, scrofula decimated the crew, and they were forced to sail without them; it is not known what became of those wretched outcasts, and—"

"I know, and will tell you," interrupted Rotaldo, in a voice and with a smile of ineffable disdain.

Paul Jones started.

"Full of daring and curiosity, they penetrated through a thousand dangers. In the interior of the country, there they discovered mines, plains, rivers filled with gold, and no method of employing these most fabulous riches."

"Oh, I can understand the tortures of these poor wretches—it was enough to drive them mad."

"You are interrupting the thread of my narrative," observed the Spaniard, provokingly, and exhibiting perfect sang froid. "Five of the men I have mentioned died from extreme misery—"

"While the sixth?"

"Alone reached France, as if by a miracle. Would you believe it," continued Rotaldo, "that when this individual related all he had seen, and displayed the plans he brought back, the poor laughed and shrugged their shoulders."

"The rich treated him as a visionary and fool."

"While in the midst of the multitude he gained but one believer."

"And that was—"

"Paul Jones!" shouted Rotaldo, with eyes flashing with the fire of triumph. "One morning the poor devil was found dead in the streets of Paris."

"Dead?"

"Assassinated!"

"Dare you accuse me of—"

"By no means," continued the Spaniard, interrupting the buccaneer; "but you inherited his plans, which, by right, belong to the common interest of our band."

Further conversation was stopped by the sudden appearance of Black Bill, who, with as little ceremony as his predecessor, entered the cabin.

The new comer and Rotaldo spoke together in hurried whispers without paying the slightest deference to their commander, who observed, not without some reason, that he could not reckon on the fidelity of either towards himself.

Paul Jones bridled his anger, and allowed Black Bill to depart without making any remark on his wonted respect towards himself, in order, if possible, to ascertain what had passed between the two adherents.

It was not long before he was made aware of the particulars of their conference, by Rotaldo, who, darting an angry and defiant glance at his opponent, addressed him as follows:

"Paul Jones, you know me too well, I fancy, to think that a little thing disturbs me, and I come of that grain that takes a rough wind to shake it."

"But," continued the speaker, "I must not expect to sail through life with a fair wind, when many as staunch as I have foundered. A man who puts his plough into new land, must expect to have it hank on a stone now and then."

Paul Jones essayed no remark, but, submitting as it were to his fate, sat down, determined to listen with all the equanimity which he could command, to the remaining words of Rotaldo.

"I have lately spoken of the legacy bequeathed to you," said the Spaniard; "of course I allude to the chart of the promised land of gold, its whereabouts, and its auriferous track, which must be trodden by your comrades as well as yourself."

"It is too much."

"Paul Jones is too generous and too just," sneered Rotaldo, "to deny a participation in the spoil which has unwittingly dropped into his hands."

"It is my intention," he answered, "to make known my purpose, when time and place serve."

"Most likely," replied Rotaldo, still in a bantering tone. "When one has gold, one has everything; it is more than the sun and genius; it is passion, sensuality, real life. Before gold, obstacles vanish, consciences cease to admonish, and then what pride—what triumph!

"We left our homes wretched, poor, unknown. We return to them rich enough to dazzle the richest, and pay for the smiles of those that scorned."

"I shall not fail to produce the plan of the—"

"Ah! by-the-bye," coolly remarked Rotaldo, interrupting Paul Jones, "you need give yourself no further trouble about it, seeing that it is already in my possession."

"Ah! can Gonzalvi have betrayed me?" exclaimed the pirate chieftain, in surprise.

"No," replied Rotaldo, more arrogant than ever. "He is too faithful; but, like a fool, entrusted the papers you had confided to him to Brandy-nose Nick, who, in his drunken imbecility, has divulged the secret."

"I regret this only on one account," said Paul Jones, "and it would have been better for the crew had they have bided my time for its revelation."

"Anxious hearts cannot brook delay."

"What do you propose?"

"I simply propose to appropriate our vessel to the carrying of us to the Californian shores," replied Rotaldo, "and for the time assume the command of her."

"And the crew?"

"Finding you have bartered your eternal welfare

to the Flying Dutchman, and by so doing are endangering theirs, have accepted me as leader of the expedition."

Paul Jones, unable to control the patience he had hitherto exhibited, offered no remark on the audacious recital, but, with a grasp of iron, fastened on the throat of the mutineer.

In vain the latter struggled.

The far superior strength of his adversary compelled him, in a few moments, to collapse into apparent lifelessness.

His stifled shriek and heavy plunging brought to his assistance several of the crew who hastened below, at first with different intentions.

There was a confused noise.

The shouts of "Down and seize him!" opposed to those of "No murder!"

Black Bill and Caesar, liberating the Spaniard, hastened with Paul Jones, and brought him on deck.

They were followed by the others, who took possession of the forecastle, while Rotaldo, suffering from the effects of his encounter, leaned against the captain.

There was a low consultation between the ring-leaders of the hostile party.

Their principal, with some difficulty, after a time advanced to the centre of the ship, and exclaimed to the pirates who had rallied round him—

"My lads, I little thought that a fire-brand would have been cast into this vessel, and, as your future captain, wish to take the sense of the crew whether our laws should be enforced on the culprit, Paul Jones?"

"We have no animosity against him; we have cherished him, but, viper-like, he has stung us in return."

"I have one proposal to make; let the sentence go by ballot or vote."

"Agreed!" shouted one and all.

"Whatever it may be I shall be guided by it," continued Rotaldo, eyeing Paul Jones, who remained gazing vacant and immovable at the scene passing before him. "Can I say more?"

As the last words were spoken, the pirate chieftain recovered from his lethargy.

The lips and muscles of his face quivered, as he entreated his faithless followers—

"I have one request to make, which, if complied with, may end contention. Blood for blood is the pirates' law, but I am innocent of that of those who should have been my messmates, and claim exemption.

"All I ask," continued Paul Jones, "is that I may be sent adrift, and trust to a mercy which is denied me here."

"I grant your petition," replied Rotaldo.

"And so will you, will you not, comrades?"

"Agreed—agreed on all sides!" they shouted, sheathing the weapons which they had drawn for their deadly purpose.

"Then get the captain's yawl ready for sea," cried the Spaniard, whose order was obeyed without the slightest reluctance on the part of the men, who unshipped and put off the boat at the command.

"The yawl is in good repair, and furnished with a month's provision," continued Rotaldo, addressing Paul Jones. "I have even had the precaution to place your gun in it, so that you can amuse yourself by shooting a few birds; by the way, as ourselves, you will have to dispense with a compass, and take advantage of the winds.

"A pleasant voyage to you," he added, with a bitter smile, "and, as your kings say to each other, heaven preserve you in its holy keeping."

"And, doubtless, you will feel its vengeance yet," answered Paul Jones. "Although I'm abandoned to

the ocean, to suffer not only death, but the most horrible agony, I shall perish without a murmur, for a voice whispers in my ear the words—

"Treason and assassination will not remain unpunished."

Rotaldo quailed before the eagle glance opposed to him, but, with assumed indifference, cried out to the crew—

"Is all prepared for the embarkation?"

The "Ay, ay!" of the seamen gave a ready response.

"Are you not afraid he will escape death?" said Black Bill, in a whisper to the Spaniard.

"No," he replied; "look at the colour of the sky and water—a gale is coming up from the East. If the frail yawl be not engulfed a thousand times before, she will be driven into 40 degrees of latitude, and lost among the icebergs."

"He is booked then," cried Black Bill, closing his remark with a passing and savage grin.

Rotaldo, becoming impatient, as he observed that more than one of the crew seemed on the point of relenting, desired that the yawl should at once be lowered down.

It was a very small boat, having only a lug sail, and two pair of skulls in it, and was quite full when the required stores had been deposited.

"Come, we have no time to wait."

"Shove off!"

Paul Jones did not offer his hand to any of the crew; but they wished him farewell when they beheld their late leader cast upon the mercy of the wave—even those most opposed to him felt some emotion of pity.

Although they acknowledged his absence was necessary, yet they admired his courage in the extremity, and with them that quality was always a strong appeal.

A few hours after the departure of the pirate chieftain on his perilous voyage, a small vessel was seen to emerge from the stern of the El Malachor.

She was well supplied with provisions and arms, and was able to leave her moorings unseen by the pirates, who were plunged once more into a stupor of drink and sleep.

Though the thunder pealed, the lightning flashed incessantly, and the rain fell in torrents, the trail bark shot out in pursuit of Paul Jones, and being doubly manned, succeeded in her undertaking.

The morning dawned as the fugitives came up with the captain's yawl, whose occupant, with amazement akin to awe, beheld in the faces that met his view, those of two of the crew of the ship from which he had been cast adrift.

It was, indeed, Gonzalvi who sat at the helm, while his companion, Brandy-nose Nick, tugged at the oars.

CHAPTER IX.

PAUL JONES' FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH THE ESQUIMAUX INDIANS.

"Yo-ho! there, captain!" exclaimed Nick, hailing Paul Jones. "Crowd all sail and bear to windward! we have taken a fancy to cruise with you, so have sheered off from the lubbers on board our old craft without sailing orders."

"This is madness replied the pirate, recovering from his first surprise, "you have foolishly encountered danger without lessening mine. You should have left me to my fate, which neither your fidelity nor presence can avert."

"Perhaps not, captain," returned Nick, "but when the crew hoist black and red—death and no quarter,

I am the lad for going straight forward ; so, smite my taffrail, if I didn't come off, and cut my cable in the handling of a marling-spike.

"Yes," added the bluff seaman, "I, Nick o' the Mull, born in the year 1680, sailor, man and boy, eighteen years following my friend Paul Jones like his shadow—snapping my pistol when he snaps his boarding when he boards—"

"And disobeying all his orders," interrupted the addressed.

"For his profit," continued Nick, in retort. "And though he now scorns my assistance, he's a right good fellow, and I will stick to him from the top gallant mast to the bottom of the hold ; yea, even as thou goest down into the cockpit."

A smile of approbation was the answer Paul Jones gave to the brave seaman's devotion, while his eye the next moment rested on that of Gonzalvi.

"Why, boy," he asked, "have you joined in this hazardous enterprise? You have already given me sufficient proof of your attachment, without exposing yourself to this present peril."

"Captain," replied the boy, "it is my duty; where you go, it is ordained that I should follow in your track."

"But do you not know," said Paul Jones, "that if the gale does not abait we may be driven to unknown lands, where icy winter ever sternly reigns, and darkness, with her scowling brow and robe of jetty hue, eternally holds sway?"

"But still it is for you I dare the dangers of the boundless deep," he answered, fixing his dark orbs full upon the pirate's countenance ; "for you the floating iceberg and the roaring winds are all defied, and death, itself, in your service, has no terrors in Gonzalvi's sight!"

Paul Jones, at these words, remained a minute in silence, gazing on him who had uttered them, with a feeling of interest, not unmixed with curiosity.

After raising his eyes, he let them quickly sink down, as if his mind was engaged in deep meditation.

"It cannot be," he muttered to himself ; "the grave cannot give up its victim, and yet the likeness is extraordinary!"

"Gonzalvi," he continued, breaking from his reverie, "we must be friends—firm, faithful friends ; our destinies are alike, and—

"You shall know all," continued the pirate, interrupting his companion, who was about to speak, "but not now. Like you, I have thrust the cup of happiness away, and steeped in bitterness of life, one who should have solaced it,"

Let us now leave this scene, and proceed to one of eternal winter : namely, the Frozen Sea, in 40 degrees of northern latitude.

In that vast space is encountered only mountains of ice, covered with snow, a raiment probably worn by them since the framer of the universe first fashioned the terrestrial globe.

The plain, arid, incapable of vegetation, and deserted, thaws not a foot in our hottest day of summer, while holy beams fall on the rock which show, but cannot melt the desolation which they halo w.

But, nevertheless, in the midst of the hope less barriers of the climate, and wild icebergs, who raise their lofty summits till they are lost in the clouds, the bounteous hand of the infinite is visible.

It is here that the Aurora Borealis is frequent and majestic, and whose vivid flash presents a spectacle of sublimity, the wonders of which cannot be conceived by those dwelling in more sunny lands.

It was to such an inhospitable region as we have described, that the adverse gale had driven Paul Jones and his companions.

To add to their misfortune, they had fallen in with a party of Esquimaux Indians, who, being at variance with a neighbouring tribe, had taken possession of their boats, and were now following the forlorn outcasts with hostile intentions, believing them to be the allies of their enemy, bringing ammunition.

While Paul Jones was yet contending with these savages, he perceived that Gonzalvi, who fought with desperation, had received a wound from a tomahawk, or hatchet, during the affray, and must of necessity perish, unless assistance at once arrived.

It came, in the person of an individual who, unseen, had witnessed the encounter, and of whom we shall presently speak more fully.

Armed with a boat oar, he quickly cleared a space around Paul Jones and Nick, who was performing prodigies of valour, and allowed the former to dart to the side of the bleeding Gonzalvi, and bear him from the spot.

The suddenness of this attack so startled and paralysed the assailed party, that it gave time to the assailants to menace them with a pistol in each hand.

"Fly!" shouted the stranger, first looking at Paul Jones, and then at the awe-stricken natives, who began to think that they had dealings with one who should be nameless.

"Fly, for your life! don't lose a moment ! I have taken greater odds than this, and come off with flying colours!

"Don't mind me," he continued ; "monnt yonder rock with the boy, while I defend your passage till you are out of danger!"

Paul Jones, following the directions of his newly-found friend, accompanied by Nick, soon reached the spot indicated, and pursued his way over the dizzy precipice.

It was a wild, strange country into which he now advanced, still bearing the fainting Gonzalvi.

The brow of the earth.

The forehead of the world.

The furrowed, jagged coast, stretching from the most northern cape down to the genial soil of wheat-fields and flowers.

Despite its loneliness, it was a beautiful region, with its great bosses of snowfields, steep promontories, and endless pine forests.

In the months of darkness, and the midsummer nights never-setting sun, may be seen the encampments the wandering Laplander—the bear hunt and savage life of the Esquimaux Indian.

All the superstition of the old world linger in the frosted and secluded valleys.

The seaman, for such the stranger appeared to be, continued at his post for some time, bearding the Esquimaux leader, who, in a language totally unintelligible, commanded his comrades to rush upon their enemy.

The Indians, having no fire-arms, were so much alarmed at his fierce demeanour, and the murderous weapon he pointed at their heads, that they would not obey the order.

Sounding-shells in the valley, now proclaimed that others were at hand.

"It is time for me to slip my cable, and put off to Paul Jones," said the seaman.

"Look here, you piratical swabs," he continued, addressing the Indians, who hailed with delight the advance of their comrades ; "don't one of you attempt to weigh anchor or give signals. If you do, I'll blow you and your infernal convoy to the devil; and the first man who attempts to follow me, will have a bullet in his brain, and a yard of cold steel in his hulk. If I don't, shiver my timbers!"

The Indians did not attempt to pursue their enemy, who the next moment was hastening up the rock Paul Jones had ascended.

By taking a circuitous route, they could attack him at a point he must pass, and with less danger to themselves.

"I have been able to keep the sharks from their prey," said their friend, as he came up with the fugitives. "I think now we shall be able to effect a retreat to some of the Canadian settlements, where we can lay up in ordinary, for a time, at least."

Paul Jones turned his thoughts to his present position, and, considering the measure the most advisable to take, readily consented to it.

"But Gonzalvi, the boy, is too weak to move," he said, "and I will not abandon him."

"It is not my intention," said Nick; "we must ride and tie, as the old saying goes."

"One mile you must bear him on your shoulders," he added, "the next I will do the same."

"It's of little consequence what becomes of Gonzalvi," cried the youth, in feeble accents. "I feel my race is nearly run, and my bones may bleach here as well as anywhere else; therefore proceed alone, and—"

"You will not persuade me to leave you," said Paul Jones, interrupting the speaker and raising him into his arms. "We must endeavour to reach some place of refuge for the night, and in the morning hurry on our journey."

"I can provide you all with shelter," said the stranger.

The offer was willingly accepted by the fugitives, who at once bent their steps forward, bearing their wounded comrade.

Though the twilight but imperfectly revealed the various objects of the surrounding region, no very long time had elapsed, when the guide became aware of the presence of their late enemies, the Esquimaux Indians.

He perceived at a glance they were surrounded.

Though he had no fears for himself, he was full of apprehension for the safety of his companions.

While arguing with himself what course to pursue in the emergency, he was suddenly induced by an unknown impulse to diverge from the beaten track, and dart into a chasm that lay on his left.

Paul Jones, unconscious of the motive which had urged the stranger to take this direction, essayed no remark, but grasping his charge firmly, and wrapping him in the folds of his ample cloak, followed into the dark opening.

CHAPTER X.

THE FROZEN SEA.

The stranger, who seemed to be acquainted with the country better than his companions, still continued to take the lead in the dismal pathway.

The wanderers proceeded along it for some distance, then, striking across a snow-covered bridge of rock, entered an open field of ice.

Here the stillness of death reigned in a landscape boundless, deserted, picturesque.

Paul Jones, who had hitherto remained silent, though impressed with the idea that they were still in danger, and that their leader had reason for swerving from the open road, now demanded why he had done so.

"I know these latitudes, and their inhabitants, of old," was the reply, in answer to the question put to him; "but though they might deceive you, they are not likely to deceive me, an old salt, who have sailed in these waters when I first slung my hammock on the seas."

"In a word," continued the old sailor, "I have discovered that the enemy is hugging us too closely, and carries too many guns to make it by any means certain we shall anchor in safety, unless we use stratagem, and put out false signals."

The sound of the conch, or shell, echoing through the solitary pass, proved the truth of the late assertion, and that the Indians were in full pursuit.

"Those darned niggers are after us," said the guide. "Never mind, we shall give them leg bail, as we are not far from our destination."

"Where is it?"

"Before us. The vast plain which stretches itself as far as the eye can reach—snow-clad and ice-girt—is the Frozen Sea, and—"

"I did not deem it possible that one who has proved such a friend, could deceive or jest with me at such a moment of peril."

"The place you speak of," rejoined Paul Jones, "is the most treacherous spot in the world, surrounded as it is, by eddies and gulfs of broken ice."

"Nevertheless, we must cross it."

"I should sooner trust to the foe than its dangerous surface."

"If there is danger, I shall be the first to encounter it," replied the seaman, firmly, "since I steer fore instead of aft."

"Besides," he added, "the perfidy of the track is our salvation instead of our ruin, for should our pursuers deviate one foot from it, they will assuredly meet their death in the frozen depths."

"Trusting in Providence and your guidance, then, we will make the attempt."

With these words, Paul Jones emulated the stranger, who dashed swiftly down the declivity leading to the icy waste, accompanied by Nick, whose silence during the late discourse had been materially aggravated by an absence of his favourite beverage.

The fugitives now commenced their perilous journey.

The sombre prospect was calculated to inspire terror in the stoutest bosom.

But brave, desperate and enduring, they gave no sign or utterance of fear.

Arrived at a point overhung by a huge archway of ice, the stranger called on the travellers to turn to the right.

"Follow me, singly," he said; "one step from the path will be fatal. Should I miss it, and be engulfed, you will take no harm if you stir not till I recover my footing."

"Have we taken the right road?" asked Brandy-nose Nick, finding the ground tremble beneath his feet.

"If I had not, we should have been some thousand fathoms lower before now."

As the stranger spoke, a plunge and a stifled shriek struck upon the ear in the mournful silence.

"One of our pursuers has perished in his rash attempt to follow us," he continued. "We must quicken our pace, or they will overtake us before we can reach the Kiglafreit pass."

"Once there, we may defy the sharks on our lee bow."

An Indian made his appearance as they were about to enter the pass lately mentioned.

A ball from the pistol with which Nick had been armed by the trusty guide pierced his brain, and his exulting voice was hushed in death.

"Waste no more powder," cried the stranger; "our danger has passed; we have gained the bridge, and the chase has ended."

The fugitives had no sooner crossed the frail passage, which was composed of crumbling wood, the work of the Aborigines, and joining the summits of the rocks leading to the Kiglafreit pass, than the

ravine beneath echoed with the sound of its falling timbers.

The stranger, to the surprise of his associates, had drawn a small axe from his belt, and, by severing the uprights of the bridge, had deprived the foe of the means of attacking them from that quarter, and rendered their retreat secure, at least, till morning.

After a few minutes' walking, the whole party came upon a snow hut, nestling beneath some sheltering rocks, and verging on the arctic circle.

The commodious dwelling of the stranger, studiously decorated with bears' skins, and other miscellaneous drapery, supplied all wants, and in the morning, after a sound sleep, and a hearty meal of Laplander's fare, the journey of the previous day was resumed.

Gonzalvi was so far recovered as to be able to walk, while he and his associates, buried in furs provided by their guide, did not feel the excessive cold which the dryness of the chilled atmosphere rendered endurable.

One thing alone had slightly affected the comfort of the guests : it was the strange appearance of their host, when exposed to their full view.

He was a square-made dwarf, with a head of portentous size, for sharp and diminutive features, and, having only one eye, forcibly brought to the mind of the observers a recollection of the spectre pilot, Hans Hinckman.

But his total dissimilitude to that party, added to his subsequent fate, soon dispelled any alarm they might have felt at the singular coincidence.

The travellers were in good spirits, and hoped to reach their destination in two or three days.

The track over the Frozen Sea was in the best possible order, and they went with ease several miles an hour.

Towards noon, the stranger, arriving at the first halting-place, bade his companions rest and refresh themselves, while he proceeded to lie down and apply his ear to the ice.

"There is a ground swell," he exclaimed, as his quick sense distinguished a hollow and grating noise, ascending from the abyss below him ; "so we must crowd all sail to reach port in safety."

"Is there danger?"

"Not at present, while the day remains clear, but if the dark streaks, which I see towards the East, should blow to this quarter, we must expect nothing less than rough weather."

The sun had now reached its height, and there was no alteration in the appearance of the sky.

But the motion of the sea under the ice became more susceptible, as the journey over it proceeded.

The sun had no sooner declined, than the banks of cloud from the East began to ascend, and the dark streaks, which had been alluded to, put themselves in motion against the wind, now blowing stiffly.

The snow was next violently driven about by partial gusts from the peaks of the high mountains, and filled the air.

At this juncture, the guide addressed his companions.

"My doubts," he said, "are now confirmed ; "it will be impossible for us to take up our night's quarters at the place I intended."

"What can we do, then?" asked Paul Jones, in accents which showed in their utterance, his previous apprehension.

"Nothing."

"Nothing! Good heavens! have you only led us to despair and death? Is there no road to follow—no succour to hope for? Is our sepulchre to be under these eternal icebergs?"

"There is one means by which I can control the destiny that threatens us; and after I have availed

it, what mortal on earth, or demon beyond it, shall deny my power?"

The wild ecstasy with which the stranger spoke, so resembled triumphant insanity, that Paul Jones answered angrily—

"Were your pretensions less lofty, and your speech more plain, I should be assured of our safety."

The voice of the speaker was suddenly silenced by a sound like that of an earthquake, while the prospect before him was truly terrific.

The ice had broken loose from the rocks, and, parting into a thousand pieces, rushed like an avalanche against the precipices that spread themselves far and wide over the wilderness.

In another instant, the whole mass, extending for several miles from the coast, began to burst, and be overwhelmed by the immense waves.

The sight was tremendous, and awfully grand.

The large snow-fields, raising themselves out of the gulfs, struck against each other, and plunged into the deep with a crash similar to thunder.

The darkness of the heavens, the irresistible fury of the wind, and the dashing of the waters dismayed the travellers, who beheld in the end, with a sensation of awe and horror, that they were separated from each other.

One floating raft of ice bore on its summit Paul Jones and Nick.

Another gave temporary succour to Gonzalvi and the treacherous guide.

Paul Jones had the misery to behold the latter refuge drift away from the one on which he stood.

"For mercy's sake—for heaven's sake save me!" shrieked Gonzalvi, struggling in vain to disengage himself from his companion, who no longer disguised his hostile intentions.

Paul Jones would willingly have assented to the boy's wish, but being more than a cable's length from him, could possibly not grasp the hand which was held out towards him.

Gonzalvi made one more desperate but ineffectual effort to rid himself of the grasp that was fastened upon him, and failing, fell down on the ice which still bore him and his antagonist, apparently deprived of sense and reason.

It was not until day dawned, that Paul Jones awoke from the slumber into which he had fallen, and discovered Nick standing by his side.

At first, his thoughts were scattered and fearfully confused.

He felt that some dreadful calamity had happened, but he could not call to mind what it was.

Finding himself buried in his furs, which his faithful friend had taken the precaution to cover him with during his protracted sleep, the truth at once flashed upon him, and he buried his face in his hands.

"Halloo, captain! you ain't going to pipe hands to the pumps, I hope!" said Nick, noticing his action. "Sailing in the sea of despair won't lead us into the haven of hope, and if we make for that port we shall perhaps be able to set at defiance the breakers ahead of us."

Roused by the nautical eloquence of his companion, which flowed in a most animated manner from his lips, Paul Jones endeavoured to look upon their present position under more favourable auspices.

"You have laboured hard, Nick," he replied, "while I have been sleeping ; it is now my turn to watch, while your rest for a time."

"Well, somehow or other I don't feel inclined to turn in just now," answered the other ; "whether it is resolution or faith that we shall soon drop the

anchor that holds me taut I can't tell, but I seem as if I couldn't sleep till we are out of this quondam."

"I must do so, too," said Paul Jones; "I must endeavour to throw off the lethargy which has hitherto assailed me, and endure with you a mutual privation."

"How do we stand for provisions?"

"We have sufficient food in our wallets, to place us beyond want for several days."

"And then—"

"We have arms and powder; wild birds abound in the region, and these resources being ever at hand, we have nothing to fear on the score of hunger."

"I know, besides, to add to our consolation," continued Paul Jones, "that Danish vessels frequent these shores, and that we may be discovered and delivered by them shortly."

Under any other circumstances, these mariners might have dwelt with rapture on the strange land through which they were speeding on the frozen raft.

The hands of winter had smote on every side the massy fragments of ice, and shaped them into every conceivable form of beauty.

Some resembled cathedrals, many spired—some splintered pyramids and broken towers.

Others, palaced cities riven by lightnings, and lying in sharp angled chaotic heaps, which, spreading in the vast desolation, were lost only in the far distant haze or iceberg.

In this sublime and lonely scene, undisturbed only by the clang of the sea-fowl, the thoughts of Paul Jones, were naturally awakened towards Gonzalvi, and his probable fate.

"We are driving on the stream of fate, without oar or rudder," he at length remarked; "I trust our companions are more fortunate than ourselves."

"Well, as for Gonzalvi, poor fellow, I dare say he is by this time launched out of danger, and—"

"What do you mean?" interrupted Paul Jones, observing that Nick answered him with a mysterious look, and but for weighty reasons would have added a nod and a wink, "speak out short and open—"

"I always do," returned the other, "and should have done so now if you had not hauled down my red rag and put a stopper on my jawing tacks."

"In a word," continued Nick, "I don't like him sheering off as he did, 'cos for why, he might have been with us now if he'd only have held on for dear life while I made the fastening taut."

"Of whom do you speak?"

"That lubber that's got the boy to be sure, who else. You don't suppose I'd say anything against Gonzalvi?—no, damme, not to be made Lord High Admiral of the fleet."

"If I am to put faith in your lingo, you must know something of this man."

"The devil a bit—how should I? and if I had axed any question, depend upon it his answer would have been, 'the cormorant says not to the mallard, where is my brood?'"

"Lay aside this useless affectation of mystery; with the vulgar it has its effect, but upon me it is thrown away—tell me what you think or suspect."

"Well, then, I think that our late helmsman has steered us into an unknown sea, without chart or compass, on purpose to bear off Gonzalvi to the devil, and that he's no other than that individual or the Flying Dutchman in disguise?"

Nick who had kept up the courage and spirits of Paul Jones, and proved himself a valuable adviser and comfort in misfortune, in a short time suc-

cumbed to a drowsiness which had attacked his companion.

Feeling they were unable to throw it off, while yet retaining retreating consciousness, they huddled themselves together under the furs with which they were provided.

This precaution probably saved life, as the animal heat of their bodies was still kept up.

In a state of bewilderment and delirium, they beheld their speed increase through the desolate region, till a death-like torpor shut it from their aching eyes.

When the mariners again came to their senses they were apparently on frozen land.

How long they had remained on their dangerous journey they were unable to calculate.

One thing gladdened their hearts: on arriving on the beach they discovered fragments of seamen's clothing, and other indications of their trafficking with the natives.

"Thank heaven! we have at last touched upon a spot that appears to be inhabited," said Paul Jones. "It is evident the crew of some vessel are within hail and that our deliverance is near."

"I hope so, captain; but the natives in these parts are very treacherous," suggested Nick, "and I hope we shan't serve 'em for a meal, as our messmates, whose garments we have found lying on the shore, may have done before us."

"What, Nick! you're not going to drift into a rough sea when we have a harbour of refuge surely! You have borne up through our worst danger, don't repine when they are perhaps ended."

"No, only I want you to take soundings before you enter the harbour you have spoken of."

"Clap on all sail then, man, if you fear a death song and a scalping match; reconnoitre while I light a fire to warm our benumbed limbs."

"There's not an ounce of wood or a blade of grass that I can see to make one."

Fuel being the most essential want of the outcasts, they at once proceeded into the land which seemed by its aspect little likely to afford it.

In the miserable country in which they had been thrown, expiring nature had made her final effort and every trace of vegetation had disappeared.

But they were not doomed to disappointment in their quest, for in a few minutes they came upon a pile of ship timber and afterwards the wreck of a vessel.

She turned out to be one upon whose deck they had trod.

She was victualled and laden with specie, but the absence of her crew left their fate only to be conjectured.

We will not dwell upon the delight of Paul Jones and his companion, at the discovery, which could only be regarded by them in their present position as a miraculous and providential succour.

Nor need we recount how three periods were past in weary toil and building a shelter.

The same monotony of sunless twilight, divided only by the hours of labour distinguishing the day.

Where, under the wing of blessed sleep, they forgot their sorrow and awoke to a frozen clime that seems to utter a knell of death.

CHAPTER XI.

LOST AMONG THE ICEBERGS.—THE DEPARTURE OF THE EXPLORING PARTY.

"What gaping is this," ejaculated Rotaldo, "are you a set of white livered cowards that you quail

because you are in a grapnel's length of danger! Heave to, or we shall have a worse voyage of it presently."

The crew of the *El Malachor*, whose worst passions had been aroused through the machinations of this Spaniard, were now shuddering with fear and trembling as he addressed them in these authoritative tones.

"Well, Señor Rotaldo," replied the pirate, De'il Rob, "you must admit that our case is a desperate one—sailing without rudder and compass, and drifting, for ought we know, into Arctic latitudes."

The men groaned despairingly, and remonstrated within themselves on their late cowardly treatment of Paul Jones, whose fate, like a judgment, seemed now about to be their own.

"Must this be?" said one, addressing Rotaldo, to whom they were bound by a power more potent than oaths—the tyrant fear.

"Not if ye are men!" he retorted, "there is hope for us yet!"

"Where?" exclaimed the crew, simultaneously rising to a man from their despondency."

"I see you were not born to die upon the inhospitable coasts of ice and snow—to travel over paths where the foot of man has never trod, or where trace of life and verdure is never met. I begin to perceive some evidences of better spirit."

"Tell us, then, how the dreadful penalty may be avoided."

"Stand stanch by me, and you will soon know; unless you submit tamely to my commands you cannot expect to release yourselves from the present danger. In a word, have you faith in me?"

"We have."

"Then in silence, and without murmuring, await the issue of my determination."

"Obedience is the pirate's motto."

"No flag but the black one, with a skull and cross bones emblazoned on it."

"Bravely and boldly spoken, my noble comrade; give me your grapples," exclaimed Rotaldo, seizing the hand of Black Bill, who had been the late speaker.

"You are made of the right sort of material for free life on the ocean."

"The *El Malachor* in her present condition is no more fit for a buccaneer craft than a tub is fit for a race boat," said Nipcheese, whose previous terror had tied his tongue, speaking for the first time.

"We can soon rig jury masts," answered Rotaldo, "and then run into some distant port, in distress, where we can get a new fit-out, with other appertances for our profession. Now, comrades, for the last time I ask may I rely implicitly on your obedience to me as your leader?"

"Ay, ay!" was the response of every pirate on board.

"Nipcheese," said the Spaniard, addressing the individual bearing that name, "as your office will be of some importance to the comfort of the crew, it will be my first consideration—I appoint you ship's steward."

"Ship's steward?"

"Yes, in the place of that swab, Brandy-nose Nick who, with Gonzalvi, has so mysteriously disappeared from among us."

As Rotaldo spoke, he took a paper from his bosom, and asked Nipcheese to sign the agreement.

The latter, for reasons best known, excused himself on the false plea that he could not write.

"Not write," echoed the Spaniard.

"Can't write my name even," rejoined Nipcheese, subtly; "never saw the inside of a school in my life."

"Poor fellow!"

"I don't know B from a marlinspike."

"Never mind; you must make a mark, and I will witness it myself."

In this manner the buccaneer compelled the reluctant candidate to accept office.

"Now, my lads," continued Rotaldo, "let us bear a hand to put the schooner in sailing condition."

The crew manifested a vast deal of animation as they commenced to obey the order.

"Señor Rotaldo, you will take the vessel entirely under your charge, and steer us to some place of safety."

"That is no such easy matter, seeing that he have neither rudder nor compass."

"Cannot ingenuity circumvent difficulty?"

"The wind is in our favour; by tacking we have a chance of reaching the fur settlements in Baffin Bay."

"They are the most northerly known."

"Yes; but it is our only chance. I will make the essay if you wish it, but mark, I do not guarantee that I shall be successful in the under-taking."

Towards evening of the subsequent day it was a dead calm.

Not a wind disturbed the glassy surface of the Northern ocean, from which was reflected with the most perfect distinctness the noble hull of the pirate schooner.

The arctic sun beamed bright and beautiful as he descended towards his golden bed.

Through extra exertions, the crew of the *El Malachor*, under the direction of their leader, had succeeded in raising several substantial jury masts, and binding several spare sails upon her disproportionate spars, had put their ship in manageable condition.

There was a feeling of joy in the breast of every buccaneer, and every hope entertained that they would reach their goal of safety in Baffin's Bay.

But these desperate men were again doomed to disappointment.

As twilight shades were fast stealing over the waters a breeze sprung up from the south, moving the ship from her hitherto steady course.

As night closed a heavy squall set in, accompanied with peals of thunder and heavy rain, rendering it so thick that nothing could be seen.

"I don't like this fog," said Rotaldo; "it is the harbinger of coming difficulties."

"I thought as much," said Black Bill, "carrying as we do such a press of sail."

"'Twas the only chance we had of weathering our point."

"What are your worst fears?"

"These: that if the haze continues we shall be drifted by a current into higher latitudes, and compelled to winter in the icy regions of the Northern Pole."

The prediction of Rotaldo was too soon to be verified.

On the lifting of the fog, the *El Malachor* appeared closely beset by frozen rocks, and cut off from the world by impregnable walls of solid ocean.

They had arrived, as had been foretold, in a fathomless sea of ice—remorseless, cold and endless night, which changes its dreary face only in the ghastly smile of the moon.

Take heed, mariners. As you still involuntarily sail northward you are among sheets of ice, whose boundary is far, far beyond human vision.

The sea is in a fury.

The timbers of the stout schooner crack, but brave

THE FROZEN CREW OF THE ICE-BOUND SHIP



THE PIRATES DISCOVERED BY THE INDIANS.

the willows that dash with wild force upon the broken ice-fields.

"An iceberg on the larboard quarter!" cries a voice.

It is that of the helmsman, who guides the ship in her perilous passage.

There is a burst of pent-up thunder, and the giant mountain snaps in two.

The upper half descends into the sea, which boils and scatters misty clouds, as she receives in her bosom the mighty heap.

It is to a region of eternal winter we must now direct attention.

No habitation is visible—no dwelling tenanted by man can be seen; but, following the spur of the farthest eminence, a thin column of pale blue smoke arises.

There stands, too, the bare mast of a half-buried ship, among the rifts and ridges.

Presently, figures of men, covered closely with furs and skins, emerge slowly from beneath the winter housing on the deck of the vessel, and descend upon the snow by a ladder and steps cut in the frozen wall of the same.

We have spoken of smoke. There is no smoke without fire, and the vapour holds out some prospect of breakfast.

We shall find, presently, a range of primitive construction, over which a kettle is slung with something seething in it, and the vessel merely balanced by two poles, upon a stick transverse.

The crew have acted precisely as predicted, and seem to enjoy in succession their scanty meal.

In these outcasts we recognise the pirates of the El Malachor, who have chosen, under the guidance of Rotaldo, this spot as their retreat.

"Nipcheese," said Harpoon, "you were on watch last, did you observe anything?"

"Nothing," he replied, "except that it's as cold inside as out. I'm all over in a shiver-de-freeze. Two o'clock on a cold winter's morning in London is summer weather compared to this."

"Well, here we are, and we can't help ourselves, though the thermometer is below zero."

"When I think of the comforts I left behind me," sighed Nipcheese.

"You must forget them."

"I can't. It breaks my heart to think how happy I was, and what a fool I've been to change my condition; but it can't last much longer, no human being can stand this cold."

"Last night," continued Nipcheese, "I whistled a tune, my breath froze, and the music didn't come out till I thawed it by the fire this morning."

"We have no night or morning here," exclaimed Fergus Blake, "the monotony of sunless twilight is marked only by our rest and labour."

"If we don't die by the frost before the victuals is gone, I wonder what we shall have to do," muttered Nipcheese in anything but a pleasing reverie.

"There is then but one alternative," observed the seaman, who had overheard the remark.

"And that is——"

"We must eat one another."

"I shouldn't advise you to begin with me," said Nipcheese, recoiling, "I shall be sure to disagree with the crew if they are any way bilious."

"Comrades," said Rotaldo advancing, "I have to give orders. They are important and must be attended—pipe all hands to the galley fire here."

In a few minutes the whole of the pirates were assembled, and the men saw in a moment that some unexpected event was pending.

"I have been thinking over in my mind," continued the Spaniard, "of the best means of escaping from this terrible place in which we have now been settled for a period of more than two months.

"We have fought," he added, "bled and seen our best friends fall with victory in their eyes, without drooping in spirit, or feeling such horror as the voiceless tortures of this boundless desolation, which freezes the mind."

"Well, well," exclaimed his companions, in an ecstasy of impatience.

"I have thought of one effort that may extricate us."

"Name it."

"The winter is becoming severer—birds are getting more scarce, and our provisions, even with the aid of the produce of the ice rocks, is decreasing every day."

"True, true."

"We have no time to lose."

"My scheme," added Rotaldo, "is that a detachment should set forth this very day and endeavour to reach the settlement of Baffin's Bay two degrees south."

"But who is to undertake this journey, and who is to remain," asked Fergus Blake; "one half of the crew are too weak to venture a mile."

"We must select from the able-bodied an exploring party that will undertake this dangerous journey."

Twelve volunteers at once assented, and with an air of apparent unconcern, shortly after the proposal of Rotaldo, took their departure.

It was a long and toilsome track these men had to follow, but, in spite of extreme privation they must needs undergo, not one of the party evinced the slightest show of fear or disinclination to complete the task he had imposed upon himself.

Fully equipped and fortified for any emergency that might happen on the inclement route, the band fifteen in number, pursued their way rapidly and were soon lost to the sight of the remaining crew as they descended a defile leading to the more southern ice fields.

CHAPTER XII.

THE PIRATES FALL IN WITH A FRIENDLY TRIBE COMING TO HUNT THE SEAL IN THE FROZEN REGIONS.

Soon after the exploring party had departed, the forms of men might be seen issuing from the narrow vista through which they had passed.

At first their progress was guarded and very slow, as though they dreaded the renewal of some frightful incident.

A light figure preceded the rest of the party and advanced every step he took with caution and surprising activity.

First mounting a hillock, then a hill of ice, he indicated by gestures to his followers the path they ought to pursue.

Nor were those in the rear wanting in the foresight and prudence of the leader of the van.

One among them moved a little on one flank, and watched lynx-like, with an eye long accustomed to read the smallest sign of approaching peril.

The appearance of these warriors (for as such we must regard them) tracing the snowy wilderness would have been singular to the European at first sight.

They were the inhabitants of the North-Eastern extremity of America, and familiarly known by the name of Esquimaux Indians.

The body of the savages, in most cases, was nearly naked, and presented a terrific emblem of death, drawn in intermingled colours of black and white.

Each had his head closely shaved, on which no hair was allowed to grow but that forming the chivalrous and well known scalping tuft.

A solitary eagle's plume, that crossed the crown and depended over the left shoulder, was sole orna-

ment of the child of nature, while a rude tomahawk and knife were his principal weapons of defence.

Each man carried a bow and a quiver of poisoned arrows, the same being a substitute for the modern military rifle not in vogue at the period of our story.

When the scout who moved in front perceived the pirates watching with astonishment this gesticulations, he raised a cry, and the chief at the exclamation drew his companions in a body to the spot upon which he was standing.

A deep and solemn silence succeeded his exhortation, in the native tongue of the tribe, and the eyes of each warrior were riveted on the pale faces they had encountered.

Although secretly amazed at the facts betrayed in the speech of the chief, the Indians were permitted to ask no questions, and reserved all inquiry for a more suitable moment.

After a short consultation, totally unintelligible to the pirates who regarded them with a strict scrutiny, the younger Indians were observed to be halted over a group of females who accompanied them, while the older ones, sullen and thoughtful, approached the strangers whose demeanour betrayed them to be more hostile than amicably affected.

While the above incidents had taken place Rotaldo, returning from the ship was made aware that strange footsteps had been discovered in a neighbouring ice pass, and dark objects apparently moving in a mass had been descried in the far horizon.

On the return of the scouts whom he had sent out he was able at once to report to his crew as follows—

"My lads," he said, "from yonder promontory a tribe of Indians have been discovered advancing. Let each be prepared for the worst if they intend mischief, and show them the difference between the stone headed arrow they use and the leaden bullet with which we kill."

"If they are kindly disposed?"

"Accept their friendship," added the Spaniard, "and treat them courteously."

"Do you think they are Esquimaux, captain?" asked Black Bill, gazing intently in his front.

"I expect they are red-skins; doubtless come to hunt the seals in their frigid lairs."

"Mayhap they have a craving for other fish, and it is as well not always to allow the sea bird to follow the gift of its natural appetite."

"We shall soon learn if they mean us well," replied Rotaldo. "Keep them from the infernal fire-water, and let none provoke a quarrel; if our intercourse is favourable, we may glean information that may hereafter be useful to us."

"I'll take your hint, captain," said Black Bill, "but if they show any signs of mutiny I shall be the first to advocate a sheer off."

"The Indians are advancing; draw up the crew to receive them."

"My eyes! we'll give them a salute!" said the pirate. "Stand by, my hearties. As I hope to sail in salt water again, if there ain't some she-thing among them, I think that will be a treat on these here cold—"

"Have you so soon forgotten?" interrupted the Spaniard.

"It is so long since I caught the sight of a petticoat, that its appearance in this latitude has shoved all orders out of this battered hull of mine. But there, I meant no harm."

We shall not pause to detail the meeting between the pirates and the natives, who by a few brief and hurried actions, explained the state of things to the satisfaction of both parties.

"They made demonstrations of peace by holding up their hands, rubbing their noses, and laying down their spears.

The seamen in their turn showing amity, by a cordial grasp of the hand, but with such warmth that the Indians shrank again under the hearty salutation.

"I understand by your gestures," said Rotaldo, "that we do not meet as foes, and you would assure us of your goodly feeling."

"You say truly," said a voice.

"Ah! you speak English," rejoined the Spaniard, surprised to hear that language uttered by an untutored savage.

"I have travelled in the country washed by the great waters."

"Your dress, differing from the rest of the tribe would induce me to suppose that you hold some dignity."

"I am Manitto, its chief."

"From whence do you come?" inquired Rotaldo.

"From the big land on the other side of the Salt Lake."

"Your purpose here?"

"For food to nourish, and for furs to clothe us."

"You have tracked the Copper-mine river?"

"Its white foam we have seen, and in the canoe have braved the terrors of the falls; we have tracked it till its soft pure stream mingled and was lost in the dark blue waste of waters."

"Have you, in your excursions, encountered men of our complexion?" asked Rotaldo, of Manitto.

"No," he replied; "never till this moment saw we forms and faces such as you wear in these climes."

"Then our victims have perished, doubtless, in the waves, and thus mitigated their unhappy fortunes," muttered the Spaniard, pondering on the probable fate of Paul Jones and his companions.

"Are you, like us, then," said the Indian, "come to hunt the cunning seal, or trap the wary otter? Do you build wigwams, and sleep on the smooth skin of the reindeer?"

"No; we are cast away on this coast, and our vessel, and not the snow hut, affords us temporary shelter."

"Can you follow the fierce white bear and beard him in his den? Dare you encounter the bold albatross, and strike the pointed lance into his rough and dingy carcass? This is what I and my tribe make play of."

"And this you must do," continued Manitto, "or beneath this dreary vault which canopies us, you will fall into that cold, long sleep, from which you will never wake but to mingle with the spirits of your fathers."

"Why, that old chap spins as good a yarn as our chaplain on board the *Bellerophon* used to do when he'd got a double allowance of grog in him," said De'il Rob to Hal Harpoon, who, like Rotaldo, was surprised to find the chief speak English in place of his own lingo.

"As we have met as friends," said the Spaniard, "why do you keep your females hence, and guard them with oriental strictness?"

"That's right, captain," rejoined Black Bill; "let us have a peep at the women folk."

"You shall see them," said Manitto, giving a signal.

Then a deep, low sound was heard like the accompaniment of distant music, and yet so indistinctly as to leave its character and the place whence it proceeded alike matters of conjecture.

To this the women advanced with a slow and regular step, chanting as they proceeded a soft low song, as a welcome to the strangers.

"They look right uns," said Black Bill. "I don't

think you could get a better choice in Portsmouth or Port au Prince."

"My wife, chief," said Manitto, leading the foremost in the female cortège forward, and comparing her ringlets to the exuberant tendrils of the vine, and her eye to the blue vault of heaven; indeed, her rare charms might have claimed such praise when in youth, but they now bore the weight of forty summers, and beauty must necessarily fade with accruing years.

"What, do I see beings of a complexion I never saw before? Are they spirits?" asked the Indian queen.

"No spirits at all, ma'am," said Black Bill, ogling the tawny amazon; "pure flesh and blood; only pinch me and see how I'll cry out."

"You are not like the red-men."

"I am not a very well-read man," answered the pirate, with a cunning leer, "though I know a little."

"You are all fine good to look at."

"Yes, the lasses tell me," said Bill, "when we chance to drop anchor, that I am good-looking."

"I like you."

"Thank ye, marm; the feeling is mutual, I assure ye."

"I never saw faces before so fair! I can scarcely believe you beings of this world."

"We shan't be if we stay here long," muttered De'il Rob; "we shall be beings of the world to come."

Manitto, who had been engaged in earnest conversation with the Spaniard, now advanced and addressed his wife.

"Corah, this familiarity is unbeseeming; the strangers will think you forward."

"No so," she replied; "no savage fierceness flashes from their eyes. The Indian's deadly vengeance lives not in their hearts."

"Shiver my timbers! what a broadside she carries," thought Black Bill.

"Chief," said Rotaldo, "you seem a mild and inoffensive people, and you must not be angry with your wife, who, struck with a sight so strange, as Europeans must appear to her, shows only her satisfaction by little harmless attentions."

"May it prove so. The red-man has but three passions: hate, love, and jealousy."

"But," continued Manitto, changing his tone to a milder and more gentle strain, "you must join us in our chase, and see with what agility the sinewy natives of these snowy climes can emulate their own wild rein-deer."

"Willingly," returned Rotaldo. "But before the hunt commences, you and your companions must regale yourselves with such viands as our vessel, blocked in by the ice, affords."

At this moment the sound of a conch was heard in the distance.

The chief, Manitto, returned the signal, and, observing Rotaldo betray some impression of intended treachery, removed his apprehension, by remarking, mildly—

"Be not alarmed, friend, the horn you have heard is that of one of our tribe—young Miamas. He and his brother, Yeni, have wandered from us during the hunt, and I have answered their call in order to bring them to our side again."

An earnest belt of faces encircled in a short time the two Indian brothers.

They advanced in company with a young lad, who walked between them.

The brothers appeared arrayed in the most gorgeous ornaments the wealth of the wild community could furnish.

Rich plumes nodded above their heads.

Bracelets, rings, and medals ornamented their persons in profusion.

Their dissimilarity of dress to the rest of the natives, with the exception of Manitto, who was equally adorned, proclaimed these individuals as chiefs, second in command, and adopting the singular title of the "panthers of the tribe."

With regard to the other of the new comers, it is now necessary to speak.

Neither in face, complexion or raiment, did he resemble his companions, who, struck with his likeness to the pirates, whom they beheld for the first time, naturally conceived him to be one of their number.

He was now rolled up in the folds of an ample fur cloak of the Indian, Miamas, who, pitying his forlorn condition, had mercifully thrown it over the youth's shoulders, with a view of sheltering him, in some measure, from the vigorous mercies of an Arctic winter.

The surprise of the pirates can be better imagined than described, when, on looking on the form before them, they recognised that of a former messmate.

It was, indeed, the boy Gonzalvi, whom the Indians had rescued from a snowy sepulchre among the icebergs, through which a perverse hunt of game had led them.

CHAPTER XIII.

ATTACKED BY BEARS.

"Two nights had we fasted on the track of the Walrus, or, the sea horse. When Yeni and myself," said Miamas, "discovered the pale-face travelling the path of the redman's hunting ground."

"He was hungered," rejoined Yeni, "and perishing with the cold that pursues alike the war-painted Huron and the Yengeese."

"Dulse from the ice rock supplied the first want."

"Skins of animals slain in the chase afforded means of relieving the second."

"Your conduct, warriors, is generous and noble," exclaimed Manitto; "the Indian is swift of foot, leaps far and turns not his shoulder when his eye should look at a foe or a friend in extremity."

"This youth appears known to you—is he one of your people," continued the chief, addressing the pirates, whom he observed had recognised Gonzalvi.

"He is a deserter from my ship," replied Rotaldo. "How he got away I could never tell, and what had become of him was a mystery which is now cleared up by his presence here."

"The law of the Yengeese," said Manitto, "punishes severely the scout who follows not on the trail."

"I shall not administer punishment, though the young scapegrace's breach of duty merits some conviction," continued the Spaniard, "but it will be policy on my part, for the present, to withhold it. He may, perhaps, give me some information concerning a greater delinquent than himself."

The chief remained silent as the pirate proceeded—

"I speak of a certain mutineer I was forced to expel from my vessel, and who, I surmise, by the discovery of this youth, to be lurking near to do me a mischief."

"You had better question him," whispered Black Bill to Rotaldo, who witnessed, with something akin to alarm, the appearance of Gonzalvi.

"Chief," said the buccaneer to Manitto, whom he flattered himself he had successfully cajolled with regard to the antecedents of the boy, "if you will pardon me, I will interrogate privately this runaway."

Gonzalvi readily obeyed the summons that was

given to him to attend Rotaldo, but remained, as hitherto, silent.

"This is a strange meeting, Gonzalvi," said the Spaniard; "I am disposed to look with a merciful eye on your late treacherous flight from us, if you can give me, in good faith, the information I require of you."

"Good faith," echoed the youth. "Rotaldo has been acquainted with Gonzalvi long enough to know that whatever befell he would not flinch from telling the truth."

"Well said, and for that very reason I would speak of your companion."

"If you allude to him who left me to perish in this inhospitable country, but yesterday, I can only tell you that he is one of a nameless race."

"Like me he disappeared most mysteriously," continued Gonzalvi; "but, unlike me, he has not again shown himself."

"I see," said Rotaldo, "you are inclined to banter, you know the retreat of the enemy, but having a sympathy with his fallen fortunes, avoid the disclosure of it."

"I can have little sympathy for one who is the enemy of all men, as Hans Hinckman most assuredly is."

"I see you have mistaken me," cried the Spaniard. "I am alluding in the present case to Paul Jones."

"Alas! of him I can give you no tidings," sighed Gonzalvi; we were parted on an ice raft, and from that moment to this I have never seen him."

"Then the ocean has swallowed him up," muttered the Spaniard to himself. After a pause, he turned to Gonzalvi, whom he addressed in the following words—

"Mark me—let what has passed between us remain a secret to these savages, who seemed disposed to befriend the crew; any hint of who or what we are—or allusion to the subject of which we have spoken—and you make Rotaldo, now your friend, your bitterest enemy."

Fearing that a lengthened absence from the tribe might be noticed, whose red blood the Spaniard was aware is ever prompt to take offence at the most trivial slight, he returned without delay to Manitto.

The chief welcomed Gonzalvi, and, with rude courtesy, presented him to his companions.

His singular beauty, diffidence, and amiable demeanour, attracted the notice of Corah, the Indian Queen, who, above all the others, remarked the becoming features of the trembling youth, and spoke of them with ingenuous freedom.

"Oh, I could gaze the live-long day on such a face as yours, poor boy," she said. "Do not turn from me; let me feast my eyes."

"'Tis a sight so strange—to me so wonderful," continued Corah, embracing Gonzalvi with rapture. "These arms shall enfold and press you to my bosom."

"You seem to gaze on the boy with more than common interest," interrupted Black Bill, jealously.

"And who can help it," replied Corah; then turning to Manitto, continued—"Husband, I will show him the best hunting spot where to trap the seal. I will teach him where the ice can easiest be broken, there to set the bait to snare the red-nosed otter."

"I will show him," she continued fondly, "how to spear the great sea horse, and climb the slippery ice cliff to scarce the hungry vulture."

"I know not whether I dare trust myself with you," interrupted Gonzalvi, with evident timidity.

"Trust yourself," echoed the amazon. "Should we encounter a pack of hungry wolves I'd throw myself before you—would with my own flesh satiate their hunger ere the ravenous beasts should harm you. I hold not life half so dear as you."

"Ay, but I must not leave my messmates."

"I'd leave all the world for you?"

"The coast is desolate and drear."

"But, we have grottoes underground!" continued Corah, persuasively, "they glitter like the sun—the rainbow colours are not more varied than the icicles, that hang in fantastic forms to adorn it. There, the exhaustless spring, is bright, and crystal streams are ever running. Come, I will show you wonders."

"I know not what to make of this strange creature," muttered Gonzalvi, on finding himself hurried from the rest of the assembly by Corah, who seemed to have some spell over him, which forced compliance to her will.

"I don't half like that youngster going on a cruise with that old catamaran. He's only a boy, and damme, if I don't look after him."

With these words Black Bill shaped his course in the direction of the Indian Queen, and her timorous companion, leaving the ship's company and their guests to discuss the merits of a barrel of pork, which Rotaldo had ordered should be served out to them.

We must now change the scene, and request our readers to accompany us to the track taken by Fergus Blake, and the exploring party.

In the midst of the distressing vexation of a severe and wintry climate, on the second day of their journey, the adventurous party were beset with bears, and so scattered that any further attempt to proceed on the expedition appeared to each of them the effect of insanity.

As well as they could, singly or otherwise, they retraced their steps, determining once more to seek the comrades they had left behind them.

Fergus Blake, separated from his companions, pursued his way.

His eyes were weary, and his senses heavy with care.

He looked in front, all was as usual, a wild landscape knee-deep in snow.

He looked behind him, the scene was just the same.

The heavens were beaming, the earth white, and, to all appearance, no living being was presented to his view.

Suddenly an unearthly growl saluted the ears of the traveller, and a bear, more than usually huge and straight-limbed, darted upon him from an icy precipice.

Fergus Blake felt for his hatchet, and grasped it convulsively in his hand. He dealt a tremendous blow.

The bear avoided it, but tumbled in the snow.

A second blow, hurriedly aimed, caught the infuriated animal on the snout and caused him to renew his attack with greater ferocity than ever on the assailant.

In a moment a heavy claw had slit the throat and front of his fur-lined habiliment.

It was well for Fergus Blake that his wrappers laid so thick upon him.

He faced his foe, but gave himself up for lost, as the hatchet with which he had been armed had been jerked out of his hand in the struggle.

For a few moments the desperate violence of a man to whom life is sweet shook off his pitiless enemy.

But his own blood had dyed the snow, and the sight seemed to turn ferocity into fury.

The man, unable to contend longer with the beast, reeled giddily at his feet, when dash came another combatant, who, seizing the hatchet Fergus had dropped, used it to some purpose.

The weapon rung upon the bear's skull, rattled on

his ribs, and was finally buried deep in his grizzly throat.

Many more fierce strokes were needed before life was extinct, and as the rescued man rose, a hand on his shoulder startled him.

"What, Nipcheese!" exclaimed Fergus Blake. "Are you my deliverer?"

"Yes!" he replied. "I didn't give myself credit for so much courage."

"But somehow or other," he continued, "I can't see a messmate in limbo, without lending him a hand to get out of the difficulty."

"Ah! your heart's in the right place," said the other; "though you be a pirate, and I shan't forget this little kindness in a hurry."

"A good action rewards itself."

"How the devil did you find me out?"

"By a mere miracle. Lost in this infernal place, I was arguing with myself, which of the icy roads would be the shortest one, to put an end to my misery, I chanced to take that one which brought me to your assistance."

"Have you seen any of our comrades?"

"Not one."

"What can have become of them?"

"Probably, the better part of them are providing a meal for the bears who attacked our party last night."

"But talking won't help us on our journey."

"What do you think we had better do next?" said Nipcheese. "I say we, because as we have come athwart each other, we shall have to sail in company."

"Reconnoitre a little, and then proceed."

"Then proceed to reconnoitre, and the sooner the better," replied the other.

"Look out, and see if you discover any new danger."

"Yes," returned the obedient Nipcheese, taking a survey of the desolate scene before them.

"Is the coast clear?"

"As far as I can see, for blocks of ice and snow-hills, it appears so."

"Then," said Fergus Blake, "we must endeavour to regain the track we came by, and crowd all sail for the El Malachor."

For some hours the travellers proceeded on their journey.

It was deadly still, but unaccompanied by a gloomy state of dejection, for they had been fortunate enough to cross a path, which they recognised as one traversed previously, and now saw a chance of reaching their destination in safety.

Suddenly, Nipcheese stopped in the course, which had been rapid, and, giving evident symptoms of distress, exclaimed to his companion—

"Messmate, I was thinking—"

"Something to the purpose, I hope," interrupted Fergus Blake.

"I was thinking that I could eat a roast fowl and—"

"This is no time for jesting!"

"No, faith!" continued Nipcheese. "I agree with you, Fergus. Hunger is too sharp to be jested with, and I feel if we proceed, I shall starve for the want of food."

The speakers were now opposite the gigantic outlines of an ice-cave, whose lofty frozen spires seemed to pierce the sky.

Fergus Blake, taking into consideration their exhausted state, and the necessity of sleep and refreshment to continue the journey, conceived the idea at once of using the hollow, before which a halt had been made, as a temporary place of shelter.

"Where are you steering too?" asked Nipcheese, as he observed his companion advancing to the cave he just spoken of.

"To see if we can anchor safely in this port."

"Why, you are not going to—"

"I shall enter it, cost what it will. You say you require rest."

"Yes, but I don't want to pay too dear for my lodgings."

"What is the use of debating," said Fergus Blake to Nipcheese, who had now come up to him. "You are now at the mouth of the cave; lead the way and I'll convoy you."

"What, before you? I know my place better; besides, I might walk into more mouths than one."

"Belay! shorten sail, and let me move ahead."

With these words, Fergus Blake passed rapidly into the recess, and the next moment was surprised to find it occupied; for, on looking round, he saw a form wrapped in a dark and ample mantle.

"By heaven! 'tis a woman," he exclaimed as his eyes scanned more narrowly the object that had met his view.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE HUNTRESSES SLEEPING.—AN INDIAN'S LOVE AND FIDELITY.

A faint light glimmered through the cracks of the ice cave Fergus Blake and Nipcheese had entered, and announced that, notwithstanding its imperfect structure, there was another tenant of the strange abode besides the one at first observed.

Like her companion, this female was enveloped in a covering of fur, and appeared to be also slumbering soundly.

The repose of these damsels seemed, in a great manner, to have been the result of the glow of exercise and animation engendered by the chase, of which several implements hanging above their heads gave further evidence. In fact, the whole habitation, adorned with rude curtains of skins, spears, and arrows, denoted that it was a permanent, rather than a temporary residence of a huntress.

"They are both dreaming," said Fergus Blake, "and their sleep induced by nature's best nurse, fatigue."

"Perhaps so, therefore we'd better sheer off and look out for other moorings," replied Nipcheese.

"I know these niggers here of old," he continued; "after a nap they get up more savage than ever."

"Keep clear of foul weather point, Nipcheese," muttered Fergus, in a low voice, in the fear of disturbing the women he was closely observing.

"They may be Indians, as you say," he added, "but if I never swallow another glass of grog, the fairer one is as beautiful as an angel."

"Yes, and the other one," said Nipcheese, "now I come to look at her, seems to be a nice plump wench, only she is an angel of rather a darker sort."

"We will wait till they are awake, and then surprise them."

"Take care, Fergus, that we are not surprised ourselves. If discovered we shall be put to the sword by the knives of the natives."

"I'm told these fellows," continued Nipcheese, "take off heads like hats, and put 'em on pegs in their parlours. Shiver my timbers, my head aches with the very thought of it."

With the suddenness of the falcon turning on her wing, did the fair Sumach, the Indian princess, start at a voice that had fallen on her ear.

Trembling from head to foot, she rose from her recumbent position, and bent her gaze towards the spot from whence the sound had proceeded. She dashed aside her blinding tresses, and at once encountered the figure of Fergus Blake.

"Zoe, awake!" she exclaimed, arousing her attendant, exhibiting astonishment mingled with terror.

The pirate, regarding her with commiseration, scarcely knew how to proceed in her present state of excitement, but, after a pause, determined to address her in a tone more akin to love than pity.

"Fair maiden, for whom do you take me?" he asked. "I am a friend."

"I have never seen a form resembling yours," replied Sumach, calmed by the tender strain in which Fergus spoke.

"Probably not."

"Are you a man?"

"True flesh and blood, my charming heathen, I promise you."

"What harmony in his voice—what a shape—how fair his skin, too," muttered Sumach, struck by the intruder's appearance, who, to speak the truth, was really a well made good-looking fellow.

Nipcheese, immediately on seeing the respect with which Fergus Blake was treated, set down the Indian maid's gazing as a mark of refined breeding, and intimated to himself—

"That she must be some person of quality by her staring—

"Say, stranger, whence come you?" said Sumach.

"From a far distant land; driven on this coast by distress, and separated from my companions."

"Do you know the danger that surrounds you here? The iceberg and the frozen fields are filled with beasts of prey."

"I have already encountered them."

"My countrymen, too, if you fell in their way, might kill you."

This information threw Nipcheese into a cold sweat, and he considered it high time to begin making interest with the chamber-maid, Zoe, who seemed not at all averse to his little attentions.

"I think Sumach would weep if you came to any harm."

"How wild and beautiful," said Fergus; "there's magic in her voice."

"You tell me my life is in peril," he continued, after a pause; "where shall I look for safety?"

"You must fly."

"But no," added Sumach, as if puzzled, "you must remain. I will try to preserve you; and if you die I must die too. I alone can save you. Your death is certain without my assistance, and indeed—indeed you shall not want it."

"What means must be used?"

"My cave must conceal you; none enter it, by the order of my father, who is chief of the tribe of the White Beaver. I will bring you food by day, and watch you by night, and wake you when there is danger."

"Generous maid, then to you I will owe my life! and whilst it lasts nothing shall part us."

"And shan't it—shan't it, indeed?"

"No, my dear Sumach," replied Fergus, "for when an opportunity offers forleaving this desolate country you shall be my companion."

"What cross the seas?"

"Yes; you shall help me to discover my vessel, and shall enjoy wonders. You shall be decked in silks, my brave maid, and have a house drawn with horses to carry you."

"You are laughing at Sumach."

"Indeed, I do not jest."

"Oh, wonder. I wish my people could see me. But won't your warriors kill us?"

"No, our only danger appears to me to be in this terrible place."

While Fergus Blake had found favour with Sumach, Nipcheese had met with a similar success with respect to her attendant, Zoe, whose skin was

as black as get, and whose laughing eyes expressed all the drollery of a Piccaroon.

"Why, you speak English," said Nipcheese, on his first introduction.

"Iss."

"Where did you learn it?"

"From strange man," said Zoe; "he tumbled from a big boat many moons ago."

"Was he like me?" asked Nipcheese.

Zoe shook her head to signify that no resemblance existed.

"Not so smart a body, mayhap," continued the speaker, conceitedly stroking his chin. "His face wasn't so round and comely as mine."

"Like dead leaf, brown, shrivel," was the ebony damsel's reply.

"Oh, ha, I see, an old shipwrecked sailor, with white and grey hair, eh, my pretty beauty spot."

"Iss, all white, when night come, he put him in pocket."

"Oh, wore a wig, but the old boy taught you something more than English, I suspect."

"Iss."

"The devil he did. What was it?"

"He teach me put dry grass, red hot, in hollow white stick."

"What was that for?"

"Put him in my mouth—go poff poff."

"String me up to the yard arm, if he wasn't learning the lass to smoke."

"Iss," grinned Zoe, displaying a row of pearly teeth, which were more than ever displayed to perfection by the darkness of her complexion.

"And what became of him at last?" demanded Nipcheese. "After furnishing the tribe with such accomplishments, they ought to have done something for the poor fellow."

"Our chief kill him."

"And ate him, most likely," rejoined Nipcheese, lowering his voice as if from apprehension. "What damn stomachs, to swallow a rough old tar. Ah! I suppose my killing comes next."

"White Beavers only kill black warriors."

"You are not one of the tribe, then?"

"No; me taken prisoner, and made Jacktotum."

Zoe's completion of the sentence was interrupted by a suppressed cry, uttered by Sumach, who had till now been engaged in earnest conversation with Fergus Blake.

The latter had noticed there was an unusual emotion in the appearance of the Indian maiden as she had given the alarm.

"You are ill," he said.

"No, it is nothing," replied Sumach, rivetting her eyes on the covered entrance of the cave.

After a pause, in a vain attempt to exhibit self-composure, she continued—

"Follow me, each of you, instantly; I have something to communicate which must not be spoken here."

A chaos of thoughts intruded themselves on the four fugitives, but of a different character, as they hastily passed the dark way leading to an upper cavern, and situated further on than the one they had quitted.

No sooner was the abode of the Indian women empty than its rude skin tapestry shook, and a man, with an enquiring glance, peered from beneath it on every object around.

The intruder was no other than the chief, Miamas, the suitor of Sumach, who had been eavesdropper on the present occasion.

"The white man's secret is mine," he exclaimed, "it will soon be in other keeping."

CHAPTER XV.

THE FIERY ORDEAL.

Sumach led his companions along a sort of causeway till they came to vast enclosures, within which rose mysterious piles of seemingly petrified substances.

These massive uprights of great height and thickness, and supporting horizontal blocks running from one to the other, and rudely carved by Esquimaux hands, only hideous figures containing numerous apertures, denoted at once that it was a place of heathen worship.

"Where are you leading us?" asked Fergus Blake. "This scene, surrounded by the rude carving of nature, looks as though it formed the abode of some hideous demon."

"It is the burial place of our tribe," replied Sumach, as she beheld the young pirate who could not repress an indefinable feeling of superstitious awe. "You will be safe here."

"I hope so," said Nipcheese. "Confound it, running after petticoats is dangerous work."

"You no love Zoe?"

"Yes, my dear, I do, only this place isn't exactly the one for making tender impressions."

"In fact," continued Nipcheese, "I begin to suspect I wasn't cut out for a lover when the waters of affection don't run smooth."

"You have fear."

"Not exactly, still I don't want to meet any of your countrymen in this remarkably quiet locality."

"You must remain here."

"I suppose so; if I pop out most likely—"

"They will kill you," interrupted Zoe.

"And if I stop in they'll scent me."

"No, no."

"This comes of woman hunting, but there's no help for it. I'd better trust this little piece of black stuff than her father's, brothers, or relations, who would, no doubt, look upon Nipcheese as a tender morsel."

Attention was now attracted by the low murmuring notes of an Indian conch, and then the piercing wails of some triumphant savages.

Sumach drew back, and her bright eye kindled.

Her blood shot like the passing gleam of the sun into her very temples, as she exclaimed, with indignity—

"We are betrayed, and by him! May the curse of the Great Spirit fall on the subtle Panther!"

"But his arrow," she continued, "shall not frighten the young fawn; his arm shall wither like the branch of the dying oak, and the snail be swifter in the race."

"You say we are betrayed," said Fergus quickly, recovering from the surprise the incident had occasioned; "that can scarcely be possible since no one has seen me enter this secluded retreat."

"The eyes of the dying eagle gaze on the sun," returned the Indian maiden. "The hatchet of the red-man sweeps people from the valley that the winds of heaven have spared."

"In a word," she continued, "you have been watched. I saw Miamas, like a poisonous serpent, creep into the wigwam of his bride."

"A rival! Is he beloved?"

"Till yesterday I thought so; but to day the beautiful Sumach accords to me the preference."

"Jealousy," she replied, "has caused Miamas to act the spy, and do a deed unworthy of his name. This tongue will blast the fame of her for whom he would of late have died!"

"I should like to put my grappling irons on him for

five minutes," said Nipcheese, "and provide him with a little salt eel for supper."

"No," exclaimed Sumach, "while rivers run, mountains stand, and blossoms come and go on the trees, an Indian maiden's vengeance is left in her own hands."

"But how are we to act in our present emergency?" Fergus inquired. "It is evident that the tribe intend to visit this place, and we are powerless to contend with the number that will be against us."

"I shall overcome them by stratagem," rejoined Sumach. "The back of the White Beaver will be loaded till he staggers under my bounty."

"The warriors are coming," she continued; "I hear the trail, though they tread on snow; let the pale-face follow me to the concealment I shall give him."

Sumach and her companions advanced to one of the rough-hewn blocks, the appearance of which resembled one of those gigantic images met with in illustrations of the heathen mythology.

Like the fabled deity, the one in question possessed a hiding-place that might serve its votary, should his safety be jeopardised, and secrete a fugitive in case of need, till danger passed by.

It was skilfully fabricated, and no indication of the retreat was perceptible from without, even on careful examination.

It was sufficiently large to allow several occupants to stand upright, and, though screened from observation themselves, were allowed, by certain loopholes, to see all that passed before them.

Ingress to the spot was obtained from within, while egress was formed at the back, by which the open country of the region could be reached, if necessity required such means of flight.

"Enter!" she exclaimed; "this place was revealed to me by accident, and, save to myself, is unknown to the rest of the tribe; you will be in no danger should you keep silent."

"If we are among the breakers, we shan't be swamped, thanks to the tight little frigate that has taken us in tow."

"Come along, messmate," continued Nipcheese. "Ain't you going to obey sailing orders?"

Fergus Blake had mechanically drawn back as he was about to pass through the entrance of the gloomy chamber Sumach had indicated.

"Why does the Yengese hesitate," she said, "when the red-men seek his blood?"

"I cannot allow you to sacrifice yourself for me," answered Fergus; "unless you accompany me I shall not budge an inch, and you seem intent on facing my pursuers alone."

"I must remain," replied the Indian maiden. "You know not the work of Sumach; disobedience to her mandate is death for all."

"Come bear a hand, the bay is under our bowsprits, and we can come at it without a damn deal of tripping."

"Depend upon it, the young lady steers by compass. Crowd all sail, do ye hear," continued Nipcheese, dragging Fergus forcibly through the aperture before which he had stopped, and alarmed at the sound of approaching footsteps.

Sumach was no sooner left alone than she fastened her eyes with earnestness towards the avenue leading to the spot on which she stood.

The deep tones of one who spoke as having authority, were next heard amid a silence that denoted the respect with which his orders were received.

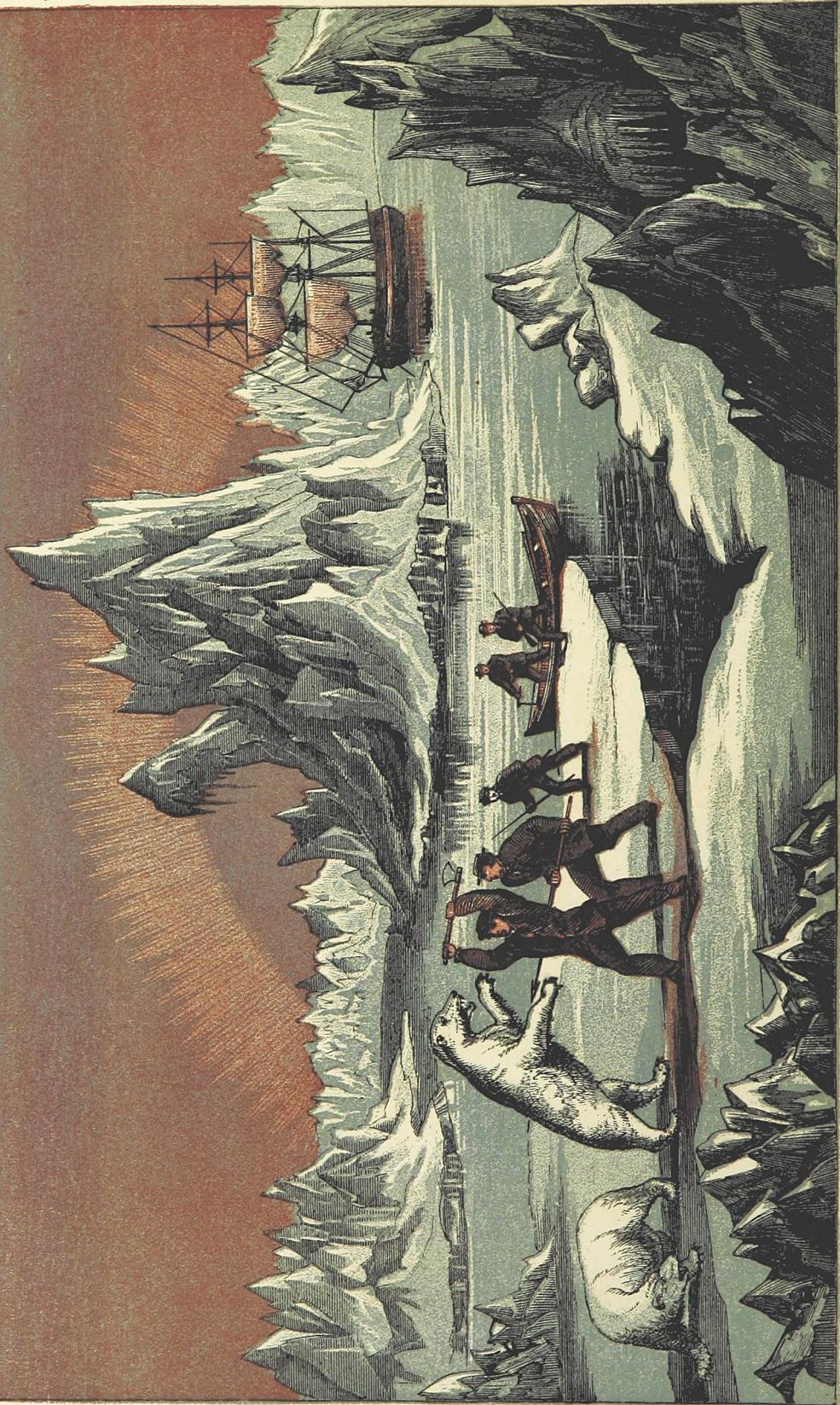
Then the measured tramp of feet, and cracking of broken ice, as if the advancing party were about to reconnoitre.

The next moment, most of them appeared at the border of the dense area



THE LARGEST ENCLOSURE SEVEN IN THE HORSE REGIONS.

THE PIRATES ENCOUNTERING BEARS IN THE POLAR REGIONS.



THE FROZEN CREW OF THE ICE BOUND SHIP



THE FUGITIVES LAND UPON THE ROCK.

Here they stood together, pointing at the ice-bound edifice, and conversing in the unintelligible language of the tribe of the White Beaver.

The consultation ended, they proceeded to scrui-

tinise every nook and corner, with slow and sullen steps, pausing every instant in their search like so many startled deer.

Chafed by the silent imputation on his daughter's

name, the chief advanced to her side, and encountered in her glance one as defiant as his own.

He then cast at her features an incredulous look, as if still distrusting their reality.

"My friend has found an enemy," said Manitto, addressing Sumach. "Is he nigh that the red-man may take revenge?"

"Let the Yengese, the pale-face, perish," shouted Yeni, in a voice of thunder.

A long and expressive silence, on the part of the Indian maiden, was broken by the same individual.

"The adder may bite, but Yeni is on his trail."

"Is he gone?" he demanded, in tones so deep and guttural that they seemed to proceed from his innermost chest. "An evil spirit has been among us, and the fiend blinded our eyes."

"An evil spirit," echoed Manitto, bitterly. "Who would blast the fame of a child of mine? I who have led my people into battle, and seen four warriors of my race live and die."

"Of whom do you speak?" asked Sumach, suddenly.

"Of the dog that carries the heart and cunning of the accused under a pale-skin."

"You see he is not here."

"Ah, daughter," replied the chief, "add not falsehood to guilt. Miamas has seen the Yengese enter your abode, which should be held sacred to—"

"I pity the warrior who grasps the hoe for the tomahawk," interrupted the Indian maid, casting an ineffable glance of scorn on the informer, who shrank beneath it as one suffering a well-merited reproof.

"Can you deny the charge?" asked Manitto.

"Sumach deigns not to answer those who doubt her honour, and, most of all, a father who maligns his offspring."

Additional pursuers were now sent on the trail of the supposed fugitive, while Manitto and the rest applied themselves to council.

Many expedients were proposed for entrapping Fergus, to all of which the warrior, Yeni, was a silent and respectful listener.

After a pause he deigned to speak—

"Warriors, you are skilful, and yet you know not how to entrap the wary otter."

"He who followed in the steps of a flying coward fell into a snare."

"The cunning red fox who haunts the northern regions may be caught, and Yeni will deliver the pale-face into the hands of his enemy."

"How will he accomplish it?"

"By extorting confession from an accomplice."

A solemn silence succeeded this incoherent burst from the lips of Yeni, and, after a pause, he advanced to the Indian maid.

All eyes, which had been curiously studying Yeni, now bent in secret admiration on Sumach, whose erect, fragile, and faultless person, caused no less exclusive attention than her undisturbed manner and extraordinary self-possession.

"Daughter of Manitto," exclaimed the young chief, "little art thou worthy of thy name. The squaw who dishonours her tribe must die."

"It is not justice, but jealousy which goads the tongue of Yeni," replied the maid, "the malice of the fiend lurks in the heart of the rejected suitor of Sumach. Hate has assumed the majesty of love."

"Accept this hand," he whispered. "Deliver up the pale-face you have secreted, and the doom that threatens shall pass as a summer cloud which darkens the heavens for a short moment then is seen no more."

"Never will Sumach wed with Yeni. He has the cunning of the hog, but none of the fox, and shall fall into that snare he has laid for others."

"Red-skins," he exclaimed, regarding his victim,

with a look of bitter envy. "A daughter of our tribe has transgressed our laws, and would bargain for our honour. Yeni demands, and you cannot refuse, that the culprit makes atonement or braves the Indian's ordeal."

"Sumach defies the hound that howls when the Yengese show him a trail."

These words excited a burst of indignation from the lips of the natives, ever jealous of the decrees of their tribe.

This was a frightful augury of their fierce and ruthless intentions.

In the midst of prolonged and savage yells, Yeni proclaimed, in a high voice, that Sumach be condemned to endure, for her contumacy, the dreadful trial of torture by fire.

"Must this be?" muttered Manitto. "The eagle loves its young—the bear its young—the fathers pities the erring child."

"Sumach will not suffer the ordeal," replied the chief.

"She will be saved."

Yeni still loves."

The circle of the Indians soon broke its order. Bustle, tumult, and wild screams, gave notice for carrying out the brutal sentence.

Manito looked on Sumach with an anxious eye, and an expression of peculiar earnestness.

Throughout the whole of these trying moments, her features had assumed the air of melancholy and reflection, and were now overcast with the pale prestiges of death.

Never had innocence displayed before her judges a form so beautiful, a heart so pure, a mien so candid yet so dignified. Sumach, at the tribunal of savage justice, seemed as some angel descended from heaven.

Miamas, though remaining silent, had listened attentively to all that had passed, and was at a loss in what manner to proceed.

He loved Sumach. The fire of jealousy at the preference she had shown to another kindled in his bosom, and the laws of the tribe were immutable.

Struggling with love, suspicion, and pity, he advanced to his brother—

"Yeni, I am more wronged than you, yet I would show mercy."

"Can Miamas plead for Sumach, who rejects his love and smiles upon his rival?"

"I will give a ransom that shall make thee richer than any of thy people were ever known to be."

"Yeni is a red-skin. He wants not the gold of the pale-face."

"Miamas appeals for pardon for her who slighted his entreaties."

"Yeni speaks not twice."

"Sumach shall not die."

"Sumach will not die," returned Yeni, addressing his brother in hollow tones that sounded like a voice charged with some prophetic mission.

"She will not die?" he continued. "Yeni but fires the funeral pyre to save her."

A flaring torch, burning in the gloomy region of the retreat, sent its red glare on the dusky forms that were about to take their part in the cruel work of death that seemed at hand.

While the Indians had conversed, a large pile of dried brushwood, used for the purpose of sacrifice, had been taken from an enclosed recess by them and spread in a circle round Sumach, who was then led and fastened to a post set up in the centre.

Sumach looked on the preparations with a steady eye, and when the tormentors had bound her, met them with a firm and upright attitude.

A frantic yell proclaimed the unresisting victim ready for the stake.

The warriors drew their knives, and, flourishing them on high, grouped themselves in a broken line.

Each uttered a plaintive and terrific cry, intended to represent the wailings of the dead and the triumph of the living.

Yeni approached the scattered faggots, and applied to them the brand he held in his hand.

In an instant a dozen blazing masses shed their lurid brightness on the place, which now resembled some unhallowed or supernatural arena in which malacious demons had assembled to act their bloody and lawless rites.

Suddenly, with the swiftness of an arrow, a dark form shot through the pillar of forked flame, which he cleared by a single leap, and was by the side of the stifling Sumach.

A quick and angry stroke of his knife cut the goading thong which bound her, and a thick cloud of smoke enveloped, in its sable mantle, the deliverer and the delivered maiden.

A scream that pierced the heart like an ice bolt, then was heard, followed by a silence that invades the sepulchre.

Breathless with amazement, the Indians recoiled and seemed to think the captive's fate was in some supernatural keeping.

Labouring under this delusion, not one advanced in the fear of attracting some dangerous attention to himself.

After some moments this superstition gave place to stronger reasoning powers, and as if by mutual intuition the assembly conceived they had discovered by what means the opportune relief had been afforded.

"He must not escape," uttered twenty voices. "Let the pale-face perish. The Yengese are not rulers of the earth."

As may be easily understood, no breathing time was permitted, and every precaution taken to capture the supposed enemy of the White Beaver tribe.

It was a useless labour, for at this moment the dark vapour which had clouded the region dispersed, and revealed no sign of either the maiden or the person effecting her rescue.

This was no other than Fergus Blake. He had overheard the cunning device of Yeni to draw him from his hiding place. His intentions with respect to Sumach, and his own probable destruction.

Thus informed, Fergus determined to profit by his knowledge, allowing the plotter to carry out his plans to a culminating point, then defeating him at the moment of their apparent consummation.

No sooner had the fiery pile been lighted than he dashed from his concealment and dragged Sumach fainting through the aperture.

Fergus had scarcely passed, when the followers were before it; but so rapidly had he disappeared, and so ingeniously contrived the escape, that not the slightest trace of either fugitive could be detected.

CHAPTER XVI.

FERGUS BLAKE AND SUMACH PURSUED BY THE INDIANS.

Beneath a jutting iceberg, whose base protruded far over a sheet of water known as the Salt Lake, Fergus Blake and Sumach had sought shelter.

They were bleeding, thirsty, faint, but their troubled spirits, soothed by a successful flight, and the repose around them, in part resumed serenity.

The lover stood aloof in eager curiosity as if awaiting or expecting the arrival of some one.

The ruddy hue along his cheek was now livid as lead, and the light brown locks rose like startled vipers on his brow.

Some paces further, Sumach leant her head, and

blood-drops, sprinkled o'er her vestments, showed that faintness came not from despair, but natures ebb.

"Moments of such a suspense as this," cried Fergus, "rend men's lives into immortalities."

"They will not be long, Fergus," replied his companion. "Zoe is the friend of Sumach. She will not lay aside the bow for the lightning of the pale-faces."

"But she may be discovered in her attempt to reach us."

The Great Spirit that made some with skins redder than the sun, while some are blacker than the sluggish bear, had wise intent—trust in him though we perish.

"The Yengese and the Huron can die but once. It matters little how one meets death."

When Fergus heard Sumach utter these words, a transitory smile crossed his countenance, as if to intimate an approval of her stern composure. After a pause he inquired into her present state, and demanded if the wound she had received in descending the declivity was slighter than he deemed or feared, and if, when assistance came, she had strength to fly.

"Oh, for a sole canoe," he muttered to himself, "to bear her hence to some spot, where hope and comfort may dwell."

These words were hardly spoken, when a dark speck dotted the water that washed the refuge.

It flew like the shadow of a roused sea mew.

Onward it came, a second following in its track—now seen, now hid by the broken precipice and floating masses.

Nearer and nearer approach the objects, till the well known aspects of Zoe and her companion are presented to view.

"We are saved," said Fergus, as he glanced at the canoes with their skimming paddles, making for the frozen strand.

In a few moments Zoe leaped into the arms of Sumach, who welcomed, with dewy eye, the constant and faithful companion of her girlhood.

The heart of the dark, but brilliant skinned attendant, was poured like a torrent on her mistress, now shining with love.

She smiled, wept, and nearer and nearer clasped to Sumach, as if to be assured that she was enfolded in the embrace.

She shuddered to see her yet warm wound, and then again smiled and again wept to find it trivial.

The sterner spirit of Fergus Blake was not unmoved at the meeting, and he who had faced death in many a hard fought contest, dropped a tear, as he gazed upon the Indian maid.

"Come, my lasses," said Nipcheese, who had pushed his canoe upon the strand; "you had better put off that hugging till we take better soundings."

"I've a shrewd guess," he continued, "that your countrymen will be in our wake if we don't keep underway, and if they bring to, we may not so easily slip our cable again."

Brief indeed was the time allowed for the fugitives, for in a few moments the billows round the neighbouring headland brought the splash of hostile oars.

Sumach, as she caught the first glimpse of armed canoes crossing the lake, beckoned her companions, embarked them and launched their own on the instant.

In the one sat Nipcheese and the attendant, Zoe; in the other, Fergus and herself.

The prows of the frail vessels darted along the bay and were soon lost in a group of islets.

Though fast the billows are skimmed, the Indian maid soon perceived that fierce pursuers glided as fast

as they, and that their hasty retreat had been discovered.

There was no time for thinking; but, obedient to the sudden order of Sumach, the two canoes separated, and, to baffle the chase, took different courses over the tide.

Onward flew the barques as if life depended on each paddie's stroke, while those following in the track gain, lose, or again make way.

Scudding rapidly like a swift sailing schooner, Fergus and the Indian maid next sought the refuge of the loadstone rock, that reared its bosom o'er the spray.

It was the nest of the sea-bird, and the surf hollowed lair of the seal.

A desert to mankind.

Sumach had done well in choosing this stern asylum, as she knew the superstition of her countrymen would not allow them to approach.

"We can rest here for awhile, at least," said Sumach, as she made fast her canoe to a projecting fragment of the dark precipice.

"I hardly like the thoughts of remaining so near our enemies," said Fergus. "When they discover we have concealed ourselves, instead of pursuing our course, they will at once search for us in the neighbourhood of this shelter."

"Sumach is wise, and what she does will shortly be seen."

"Have you no fear that your tribe will find us? Depend upon it this place is not likely to escape notice."

"The White Beaver will not enter the haunt of the Dragon."

Sumach had scarcely uttered these words, when the sound of a canoe upon the waters was heard.

They have ventured, nevertheless, to approach it," said Fergus starting at the noise.

"The red-man's desire for vengeance, has overcome his fears and given him strength to tread the path that leads to death—let him meet it at the hand of the evil spirit he defies."

As she spoke, Sumach led her companion into a deep fissure in the rock, and crossed a path that gave access to the steep road of the precipice, that reared its head in front of them.

But long ere Fergus had reached even the upper end of the pass, the adventurous Sumach had accomplished the dangerous enterprise he was about to undertake.

He had in vain been turned aside from the direct line of ascent of the precipice, by the intervention of difficulties which could not be seen from its rugged base.

His route upwards became more and more circuitous and hazardous.

Every now and then large fragments, to which he was about to trust his weight, gave way before him, and thundered down into the abyss lying at his feet.

In some cases the detached pieces rushed by Fergus and threatened to bear him in their headlong course.

A steady eye, a firm foot, and a courageous heart carried him through the desperate attempt, and in a few minutes he had achieved his perilous ascent, and stood by the side of Sumach on the summit of the precipice.

At this moment they beheld two forms advancing slowly and cautiously along the very steep they had lately climbed.

Their dress, being that of Europeans, led the fugitives to hope that these individuals were some of the wandering crew of the *El Malachor*, and that with their assistance they might possibly elude the vigilance of their pursuers.

As they came nearer, Fergus failed to recognise

in the appearance of these persons (the one a tall, the other a dwarfish man) any resemblance to the parties he had expected, yet, through the thin haze which hung over the ascent, their aspect seemed familiar to him.

In a few moments attracted by the shouts of Fergus, one of the strangers advanced to him.

He was wrapped in a rough overcoat, with a broad leaf sugar loaf hat, ornamented with a single red feather.

Beneath the outward covering was discovered a loose serge jacket; Guernsey frock and enormous breeches, thrust into boots drawn up to the knees.

The features of this man, though sallow, were well formed, while his deportment was sailor like and commanding.

Fergus lost in his thoughts respecting the individual who had appeared so mysteriously and in a place so remote, left Sumach to question him alone.

"I bring no evil," said the stranger, reading perhaps some superstitious feeling in the looks of the Indian maid. "Evil from me you never felt and never will."

"Nor do I fear any," replied Sumach, exerting herself to throw aside her previous apprehension.

"Though thou art not of my affinity, I am a well-wisher to thee; thou art brave, kind-hearted, and to those who possess such qualities, I am ever a friend."

"Why do you tell me this?" asked Sumach.

"To warn you and your companions, whom chance has thrown upon this unholy rock."

"Let me know the danger that surrounds us?"

"Your enemies will seek, but fail to find you, if around your neck I hang this gifted chain. It is wrought by no earthly artist. It will give you protection to pass into the recess where slumbers, in dark obscurity the scourge of the ice-girt regions."

"The Dragon's Haunt," interrupted Sunach, "the hideous reptile has ever been the harbinger of evil to the red-man and the Yengese."

"You must enter it."

"I dare not."

"You must speak more plainly," said Fergus, awaking from his reverie, which had failed to call the features of the last speaker to his mind; "I am no guesser of riddles."

"In plainer language then," returned the other, "those whom you have eluded are hurrying hither, and the White Beavers are on your trail."

"If you like their company better than mine," continued he, "I have no title to be offended."

The sound of the Indian conch at this moment echoed through the adjacent valley.

Fergus, now convinced that the stranger was not deceiving him, hastily and in alarm demanded if he and Sumach might rely on his apparent friendship.

Pointing in the direction of the dragon's haunt, he abruptly remarked—

"Do not fail to go thither; it may be, we shall meet before you reach the necromantic spot, if not, the charm I shall give your fair companion will protect you from the fury of the monster, meanwhile, our roads lie different—farewell, and speak not till I again come up with you."

As he spoke, the stranger presented Sumach with the mystic chain he had previously offered to her.

No sooner had she accepted it, than the supernatural demon vanished from her side, and his tall, dark form was lost among the windings of the precipitous track.

CHAPTER XVII.

TWO HUMAN HEARTS DIFFERENTLY CONSTITUTED.—
GOOD AND EVIL.

None pursuing, Sumach followed more closely in her wake than either of her rejected suitors, the brothers Yeni and Miamas.

So rapid had love, hate or jealousy urged their flight through the waters of the lake, that their canoes had reached the place of refuge almost as soon as the fugitives had entered it.

Yeni rushed into the surf and fastened on the canoe, which Sumach had driven on the bank, with the tenacity of a hound seizing his prey.

Shattering it against the rocks with his utmost strength, he cast the remnants of the slight vessel one by one upon the waters.

With malice he exclaimed—“They must be adroit swimmers who could venture across the Salt Lake.”

“Escape for them now is impossible,” said Miamas, surveying his brother, “since their boat is swamped in the current.”

“They would have had no use of their canoe had I not destroyed it,” returned Yeni, who, touching his quiver, continued, “Here is something that will do more than shoot sea-fowl.”

“What do you intend?”

“To kill.”

“Sumach?” interrupted Miamas, recoiling at the idea.

“No, the pale-face who bears her company. As to the faithless one who speaks our tongue, let him who is slighted send his arrow where he listeth.”

“Doubt not; Miamas will do himself and people justice.”

With such determinations, the warriors commenced the ascent of the path already taken by Fergus Blake and his companion.

Miamas and Yeni had not proceeded far, when they encountered the same mysterious individual who had accosted the fugitives.

“Rash mortals,” he exclaimed, “know you not you are treading on ground forbidden to the foot of man?”

“I am Vanderdecken, the Flying Dutchman,” continued the speaker, “and the region wooded by the northern wind and tempest tossed billow is my domain.”

“The Great Spirit,” replied Miamas, haughtily, “gave the lands around the great fresh waters to the Yengese, and to his red children, and these did he fashion for myself as well as thee.”

“Madman!” exclaimed Vanderdecken, “dost thou not fear to beard me upon this spot, where my power is uncontrolled and upon which, should I see fit, I could punish thy timidity with instant death?”

“I fear you not,” answered the Indian. “You will not make me, a warrior of the tribe of the White Beaver, bend in adoration to one I deemed an arrant imposter! Keep your threats to terrify old squaws! Miamas scorns and defies them!”

“Chief, thy scepticism amounts to fool-hardiness and I would ask the question.”

“Let it not tire my patience.”

“Do you forget the sea dragon, whose fierce ravages well nigh desolated thy native land?”

“The country was rid of the scourge,” said Miamas.

“By my power alone,” interrupted Vanderdecken, “a mighty spell lured the pestilential creature into the mighty fastnesses with which this jagged shores abound.”

“The monster disappeared from the hunting

grounds of our fathers, but by what means I do not pretend to say,” observed the Indian, “however you got the credit of it, and a tribute of three elks has ever since been paid to you by our tribe on the first day of every new moon.”

“And if that tribute should ever be neglected,” shouted the Flying Dutchman, “the dragon will again visit the wigwams of the White Beaver, and the horrors which its presence brought will be redoubled.”

“The red-skin fears not the subtle reptile,” retorted Miamas, “his eyes have beheld the monster swept into the depths of the mighty waters.”

“Whether he perished will be proved, ere many hours roll over thy head,” said Vanderdecken, with a malicious smile.

“This is the day of the new moon,” he added; “at present the tribute of thy people has not been paid. Should they fail, the truth of Vanderdecken’s words will be made manifest.”

“Till the danger come, Miamas will have no apprehension,” he answered, “as he has already told you, he is no believer in thy assumed power, and therefore can have no dread of any evil that menaces him withal.”

“Come, brother,” continued the Indian, “the panther may get into snares set by those whose face is the colour of snow, but he is strong, and knows how to break through them; follow me, the voice of Sumach should call us to her side.”

Miamas, at a bound, leaped a chasm at his feet, and bounded in the direction taken by his faithless bride, and her companion, Fergus Blake.

Vanderdecken, whose resentment was wound up to the highest pitch by the impenetrability of the young Indian chief, watched him for some time with a look of deadly hate.

While he was engaged in thoughts of how he could most readily take a deep and ample revenge, he was accosted by his remaining companion, whose feelings suddenly became of a similar nature.

During the late discourse he had uttered not a word, but his passions were obviously irritated.

“Yeni would speak with the wizard,” he exclaimed.

Vanderdecken turned as the voice fell upon his ears.

“He would ask advice on a subject nearest to his heart.”

“And should I deign to give it,” replied the Flying Dutchman, muttering a curse betwixt his teeth, “you would reject my counsel, even as thy hated brother has done just now.”

“Away!” he continued, “and urge me not to a punishment of thy presumption, even on the spot on which you stand.”

“Miamas and myself, though brothers, have but little of that love which cements relationship,” was Yeni’s answer. “Wizard, he derides thy power, and—”

“And you are—”

“Willing to become thy slave!”

“Ha!” exclaimed Vanderdecken, “is it so? But ere I can enlist you in my unholy league, you must say what favour thou dost crave of the Flying Dutchman.”

“The wizard probably may know that the brother of Yeni doats on the fair Sumach, whom he has sought in vain so long.”

The Indian paused.

His countenance was flushed.

His eye angry.

And his swelling figure would have produced a sensation of awe in any other but the one who now observed his actions.

“The thought,” continued Yeni, “is madness, for

no heart can picture how fondly, how ardently this bosom throbs with affection for the bright-eyed daughter of our tribe. Say, wizard, canst thou aid the lover, and quench the fierce fire which consumes his soul?"

"I have both the power and will to save thee, chief," replied Vanderdecken, in a deep, low tone, "but it must be upon certain conditions."

"Name them, and even before Yeni learns their purport, he at once accepts the terms, however horrible they may be."

"Tis well; you must henceforth swear to follow my injunctions. How say you—are you ready to ratify the solemn compact between us?"

The darkness of the impending cloud, which precedes the burst of thunder, was not blacker than the brow of the Indian, as he exclaimed—

"Yeni swears to place himself under the control of him who demands his allegiance—to obey him in all things, and to worship him even as the Great Spirit."

"It is sufficient!" returned the Flying Dutchman. "Do you keep thy oath, and I will not fail to observe mine."

"Great wizard, Yeni relies upon you in all things, yet faint would learn by what means the project is to be carried into execution?"

"My design is simple and well conceived," returned Vanderdecken. "You are aware of the conditions upon which I deprived the Sea Dragon of its power to ravage the land. This is the day of the new moon; but hitherto the tribute of thy tribe has not been laid at the accustomed place.

"When the hour arrives, which completes the term, the monster will again rush from his vasty lair," continued the Flying Dutchman, "the region will once more be subject to devastation, and the first object of its rage, will be the Indian maid."

"How," exclaimed Yeni thunderstruck. "The fair Sumach to be the victim of the reptile's wrath."

"She will not be sacrificed, and her life held as sacred as the vestal fire; therefore be under no apprehension for her safety."

"But," continued Vanderdecken, "the hour for the monster's release is at hand. Hans Hinckman, my deformed slave shall lure it hither, and direct its course to the retreat of Sumach."

"And once there?" asked Yeni.
"She will vanish like a meteor to a subterranean cavern, where she shall remain till you can make her yours; while you will have no cause to regret having trusted to the promises of Vanderdecken, the Flying Dutchman."

"Yeni trusts the wizard."
"When next we meet you must be prepared to perform your promise, also to obey my injunctions; and remember, the least prevarication on your part will meet with a punishment whose severity no mortal mind can conceive."

As he spoke, the Flying Dutchman glided towards the upper end of the rock.

His pale countenance became more cadaverous. His lips more livid.

While his eyes, deeper sunken in their sockets, were now lighted up with a bistre coloured circle around them.

Suddenly the metallic rock which surrounded him opened with the fearful crash of thunder.

The chasm was filled with fire.

All light was then extinguished, and the form of the spectral skipper wafted, as it were, into the dark expanse.

Yeni started, then remained silent and motionless, on beholding his late companion vanish through the riven opening.

The next moment his glaring eyes beheld him

borne away like lightning on the wings of a wild flame till he was lost, as a speck, and then disappeared.

Again the cleft closed, darkness resumed her dominion, and the Indian was left alone.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE LOAD-STONE ROCK.

With heavy foreboding, and oppressed with gloomy anticipations, Fergus Blake and Sumach proceeded on their road to the Dragon's haunt.

The stillness of the rugged path was broken only by the screech of the wild bird, and the howling wind.

Each, wrapt in their own thoughts, readily obeyed the Flying Dutchman's injunction, and maintained a silence which was consonant to a moody reflection.

Fergus, all at once, started as they were urging their onward course, and turned to look behind him.

He had become aware that a strange foot was following his own.

Presently a dark figure presented itself in the distance.

The obscurity of the region prevented Fergus from discovering whether it was that of one of the pursuers or not; but it soon became evident, by his actions, that he was not ill-disposed towards the fugitives.

Suddenly recollecting that Vanderdecken had intimated his intention of following them, he felt no doubt that the measured step he heard advancing was his.

The individual in question seemed to select, by instinct, the blind signs of their route.

He never abated his speed or paused to deliberate.

A rapid and oblique glance at the objects through which he waded were sufficient to determine his path, and to remove his greatest difficulties.

In the meantime the region had changed its hue, and revealed more distinctly the appearance of the expected companion of the journey.

Before Fergus could recover his surprise he found, instead of the Flying Dutchman, Miamas standing by his side.

Sumach, overcome with terror, felt that if she would save her lover the attempt must be made without a moment's delay.

While he stood paralysed, she hastily snatched a pistol from his belt, and levelled it at the Indian.

The latter, nothing daunted, exposed his bosom to the threatening weapon.

"Fire," he cried, "Sumach cannot inflict upon Miamas a greater injury than that which he has suffered already; if he is not permitted to enjoy her love it is, at least, a happiness to die by her hands."

The unlooked for avowal caused the maid to drop her arm and fix her eyes, with a gaze of keen inquiry, upon her rejected suitor.

"Does not Miamas seek his rival's blood?"

"He has no rival. Miamas loves only, and must be beloved."

"But he can hate?"

"Not when Sumach adores. Since she rejects my suit, I must need accept her affection as a brother."

"Can the panther be so noble?"

"The generosity of the savage makes the white man blush for the errors of his kindred," exclaimed Fergus.

"Brave Miamas," he continued, grasping his hand, "my tongue fails to speak my gratitude, but

my future life shall prove how much I honour you."

There was a tear in the eye of the Indian as these words were spoken, but it vanished as spring sunshine succeeds the sudden shower.

With a smile, Miamas addressed his companions—

"Though danger lurks in the path of the Yengese, the red-man will avert it."

"We are ready to meet it."

"The snake is crawling, and you cannot extract its sting," exclaimed Miamas.

"Yes," returned Fergus, we are protected by the gift of the Flying Dutchman, and—"

"Trust not the ice that bends," interrupted Miamas, "the wizard has a tongue like the false call of the wild cat."

"His cunning," continued the Indian, "tells him how to get together the goods of the earth, and his arms to enclose the land; the Great Spirit gave him enough, and yet he wants more—such is the Flying Dutchman."

"Forbear, forbear, Miamas, I beseech you," cried Sumach, while her blanched cheek bespoke the terror that inspired her. "Oh, enrage not the powerful being whose wrath might in an instant overwhelm us with destruction."

"Calm your apprehensions, Sumach," said Fergus, "and our friend will promise, I know, for your sake, not to offend Vanderdecken again either by word or action."

Miamas made no remark, but turned abruptly and announced it was time for them to depart.

Sumach had learned to still the exhibition of her emotion, and, accompanying Fergus and Miamas, descended the further precipitous side of that eminence which they had lately ascended.

The Indian appeared to be familiar with the sequestered place where they now were, and, as he sat about his work of guide with such perfect freedom, Fergus was induced by curiosity to inquire into the circumstances of their late pursuit.

"How is it you were able to come up with us so soon?" he asked, "and discover our ambush?"

The sight of the Indian is too keen to be cheated," replied Miamas; "a black speck on the lake is the sign of a canoe, and the rock we are treading the refuge of an outcast."

"And these simple indications were sufficient for you to guess our whereabouts?"

"You say truly. I knew, in her flight, Sumach could have but one retreat, and, as you see, Miamas has taken the burthen she was destined to bear."

Fergus at this moment observed Miamas diverge from the open path, and dive into a deep and dark valley on the left.

"Why have you left the main route?" said Sumach. "If we are entangled in the intricacies of that loadstone rock we shall perish of hunger."

"Do you not hear the conch of the tribe?" replied Miamas; "they have got our trail, and with it the scalp of the Yengese, unless I put them off the scent."

"His sense of hearing astonishes me," muttered Fergus, after a time, as the sound the Indian had spoken of reached him; "he must have observed the signal three minutes before myself."

After they had gone some distance, during which a profound silence had ensued, Sumach ventured to ask again the object of their journey.

"We shall reach the inner bay by this track," said Miamas; "we are on ground that I have often travelled in the seal hunt."

"But we are at some distance from the place you have mentioned," said Fergus, advancing with interest nearer the scout.

"It is yet a long and weary path," was his answer, "but I know how to strike it."

"Then we have no boat."

"We shall find there materials with which a rude raft may be formed, that will drift us with safety over the sheet of dull and dreary water."

The progress of these adventurers was, after some toilsome miles had been accomplished, interrupted by a number of huge blocks.

These had been thrown up by some convulsion of nature, and, crumbling like a broad barrier to a wilderness, served as a shelter to the oppressed fugitives.

"Ah!" said Miamas, pointing to the spot in question, "this is the signal given to man to seek his food and natural rest; better and wiser would it be, could he understand the gifts of providence, and take a lesson from the fowls of the air and the beasts of the earth."

Without waiting for an assent, or, indeed, any reply, the speaker moved boldly into a recess before him.

While Fergus hesitated to approach the hollow, Sumach entered it without fear, and seemed prepared to enjoy the halt with obvious interest.

"Is our resting-place sufficiently retired?" demanded the vigilant Fergus. "Have we chosen a place sufficiently unknown and rarely visited?"

"Few live who know of it," returned Miamas, "I, by the veriest chance, discovered the singular fastness; but discussion may interrupt the harmony so necessary to the preservation of yourself and your fair companion; we have journeyed far, and fatigue and weakness require rest and refreshment."

The dialogue ceased as Miamas drew a gourd and some eatables from a wallet hanging by his side.

Fergus and Sumach partook of the rude cheer which duty required, much more than inclination prompted them to accept.

The meal had ended, and the jaded wanderers fallen into a doze, when a step was heard as if making for the solitary retreat.

Miamas sprang to his feet, and with increasing intenseness peered into the gloom.

"Who comes?" he cried, feeling for his tomahawk at the place where it was usually suspended. "Speak—friend or foe?"

"Friend," replied a low voice. "Time to move when sleep shuts the eyes of the red-man."

"Miamas hears an enemy," whispered the Indian. "I scent danger in the wind."

"Heaven forbid!" said Fergus, aroused from his light slumber.

While speaking, he drew his pistol, and prepared to expose his life in defence of his companions."

"'Tis some wild animal of the region prowling around us in quest of food," he continued, in a whisper, as soon as the sound which startled Miamas had reached his own ear.

"No, 'tis a man," returned the attentive Indian; "possibly one of the outlying parties, who have struck upon our new track."

"I don't like to spill blood in this spot," he added, looking round with superstitious awe marked on his features; "but the safety of Sumach demands the sacrifice."

Miamas bade his companions retire further into the recess.

He would take no denial.

Fergus, with some hesitation, obeyed the behest.

The approaching footsteps were now too distinctly audible to leave any doubt as to the nature of the interruption.

Miamas, brave and even fierce as he sometimes

was in the combat, could not, in the moment, make any reply to the cool and characteristic remark of the intruder, whom he at once recognised as Vanderdecken, the Flying Dutchman.

"I am an unbidden guest to your frugal banquet," he exclaimed, "but the tide, from whose spray my footsteps are forbid seldom to separate, is on the fall, and I am permitted for a time to visit earth."

"How have you discovered us?" asked the Indian, after a pause, still doubting the speaker's supernatural attributes.

"A power which you scorn, and which will assuredly in the end punish you, contumely summons me hither; but I come not to bandy words with an untutored savage — my business is with Fergus Blake."

The seaman, upon perceiving Vanderdecken, advanced towards him.

"You come," said Fergus, "I see, in fulfilment of your promise."

"I see you are inclined to do me the justice I deserve," replied Vanderdecken, "and I will not throw away my friendship on you, who hold it not lightly.

"In a word," he continued, "you, unlike your companion, have faith in me."

"I have heard," answered Fergus, "that human wisdom is worse than folly when it is applied to mysteries beyond its comprehension, and that if we believed no more than we could understand, we should resist the evidences of our senses, which present to us, at every turn, circumstances as certain as they are unintelligible."

"Were I to treat you with the want of that confidence you now show towards me, I should be worthy of the stigma with which mankind, in the ignorance of their hearts, brand me."

"Therefore," added the Flying Dutchman, "I must curb your adventurous spirit, which would urge you to the brink of a precipice more dangerous than was ever washed by a spring tide."

"What mean you?" asked Miamas.

"This: that through the omission of the tribute of your tribe to the Dragon of the Northern seas, he will once more ravage this frozen land for the prey which you have failed to provide for him, and a few short moments will serve to bring him hither."

As Vanderdecken spoke, a dwarf, having only one eye, rushed wildly into his presence.

He bore on his shoulders a huge white elk, whose blood still flowed profusely.

The long track of gore at once attracted the terrible Kracken—the dragon of the Polar regions—to its desired victims.

A wild scream of terror burst from their lips as they beheld the monster, with gaping jaws, advance to seize its prey.

Sumach would have fallen at once a victim, but the charmed chain which she had received from Vanderdecken preserved her.

The dragon scowled at the gift as if at once incensed and overawed, and then, coiling himself up in a thick sulphurous cloud, disappeared from the place.

The effect of the stifling vapour upon Miamas was most extraordinary.

The whole region seemed to dance around him. Ghastly figures assumed more hideous forms, then changed again into those of ferocious monsters of the deep.

Fragments of the loadstone rock withered and shot forth like hissing serpents.

A maddening feeling of excitement suddenly took possession of him, and he seemed carried swiftly to a distance from Sumach and Fergus.

His rapid flight, which had overcome all opposing impediments, at length ended, and as he plunged into a stupendous chasm he fell exhausted and insensible.

How long he remained thus he could never tell; he could only remember that he was aroused by a finger coming in contact with his frame.

A pang like death shot through his heart as he felt a hand on his shoulder.

Looking up, Miamas discovered the pallid features of the one-eyed dwarf who had attended the dragon.

The Indian endeavoured to creep away, but the dwarf, with a great effort, detained him.

"Why do you wish to avoid me?" said the dwarf, retaining Miamas in his grasp, while his single eye glowed like fiery coals. "If you endeavour to escape from the toils of him who brought you to the loadstone rock, you will of a necessity meet a terrible doom."

Miamas, after a pause, recovered his speech, but his words were faintly uttered, and with difficulty he demanded—

"Who art thou?"

"The enemy of thy enemy—therefore I am thy friend."

"Art thou not the servant of the wizard, and—"

"A servant, I grant, you," interrupted the dwarf, "but an unwilling one, nevertheless; my destiny is not to be averted; yours, on the contrary, rests in your own hands."

"What am I to believe?"

"That you may avenge yourself and me, too, by destroying a fiend over whom I have no power, save by the assistance of one constituted like yourself."

"You say I can defy my fate?"

"Assuredly, if you are wise enough to be guided by my counsel. Your sorrows are not unknown to me, and though I have been constrained to watch over them I have felt that a time would come when I might alleviate your misery, and satisfy myself by a trifling repayment of the injuries I have received from the tyrant whose rod is law to me."

"I do not want vengeance, I want to be with her—with Sumach."

"I may probably rescue the maiden from the artful snares of her persecutor," replied the dwarf, "but as I am only secondary to a superior evil being, my purpose of rendering you assistance is somewhat hazardous."

"Vanderdecken," he continued, "has seen the maid whom you love, and being captivated, as yourself, has resolved to possess her."

"But Sumach despises him, does she not?" asked Miamas.

"Yes," replied the dwarf; "she has resisted his importunities with the utmost scorn, and her firmness had brought on her a terrible punishment."

"Punishment?"

"She had been conveyed to the cavern of the winds beneath the loadstone-rock, and converted into a statue of ice."

"Horrible doom, but I will not abandon her," said Miamas in frenzied tones.

"She is held by an arm of iron, and can be released by your aid alone," continued the dwarf.

"Say, then, are you willing to brave the dangers that must attend your undertaking in this good work?"

"Instruct me how I am to perform the task," he answered, "and I here promise to fulfil my mission or perish in the attempt."

"Bravely resolve!" exclaimed Hans Hinckman, whom the reader may have recognised in the one-eyed dwarf, "and I also pledge myself to aid you by every means at my command."

THE FROZEN CREW OF THE ICE BOUND SHIP



SUMACH AND HER FRIENDS FOLLOWED BY THE INDIAN CHIEF.

"Lead me to Sumach," said Miamas.
Follow me and I will bring you to her?"
"With that assurance, I will go, though a grave
receive me."

Hans Hinckman glided on with noiseless steps.
Miamas followed him along the gloomy path-way.
Presently they came to a labyrinth, and, tracking

it swiftly, came to a flight of rude steps leading to a steep abyss.

These they descended, and passed into a subterranean passage, hewn out of the metallic mass composing the loadstone-rock.

Along this passage, which was of some extent, Hans Hinckman proceeded with Miamas at his heels.

At last they came to another flight of steps, and here the dwarf stopped.

We are now above the cavern of the winds, where you will find Sumach," he said. "Descend, the way is clear before you; I have other work to do.

"Confiding fool," exclaimed Hans Hinckman, "he believes the lie I have told him. Hum! the pitfall is dug; now to see the idiot tumble into it."

Miamas obeyed the injunction he had received, and, as he advanced, was surprised to find his companion gone.

He had neither passed nor descended the steps, and, therefore, must have sunk into the frozen waters.

Miamas' terror was now increased by hearing a voice—it was loud, shrill, and pierced the very recesses of his soul.

CHAPTER XIX

THE STATUE OF ICE.

In one of the loneliest recesses of the coast, where a deep indenture gave the tide access, was the spot chosen by the Flying Dutchman to meet Yeni after his late daring exploit.

As he advanced to the rugged gap, which superstition invested with magical as well as mischievous qualities, he found the Indian anxiously awaiting his appearance, to learn how far he had fulfilled his promise and realised the fond hopes he had given of obtaining for him the hand of the beloved Sumach.

"Has your design been successful?" asked Yeni, as soon as Vanderdecken approached him.

"To the full extent of your most sanguine wishes," replied the latter. "The girl is now secure in my abode beneath this magnet of the pole.

"So soon as you have promised to fulfil your oath," continued the Flying Dutchman, "I will convey you to her presence."

"Once there?" said the Indian.

"You will have an opportunity of compelling the proud beauty to become yours," rejoined Vanderdecken.

"Keep me not in suspense," cried Yeni.

"Name your terms, and, by the head of my father, I swear to observe them."

"I am satisfied. While with the same promptitude I have observed your wishes, I shall expect you to regard mine. Your brother—"

"What of him?"

"Has he not ever been the means of dashing the cup of happiness from your parched lips?"

"He is the adder that ever crossed the path that Yeni trod."

"Your kinsman is also my enemy," continued Vanderdecken, "the eternal scoffer of my supernatural power, and I have vowed to revenge myself even in his blood."

"His blood," echoed Yeni.

"Even so. The blow must be struck, and Miamas must die by his brother's hand."

For a moment Yeni stood horror-struck at the avowal, then prostrating himself before the Flying Dutchman, entreated to be spared so foul a deed.

The supplicated gave one of those laughs of which a demon is alone capable, then, with a malicious grin, exclaimed—

"Have you so soon forgotten your oath?"

"Miamas I hate, but I cannot, dare not take his life."

"Then our compact ceases," returned Vanderdecken.

"I reserve thee for a living death of torture. Sumach at once becomes thy brother's bride."

"Wizard thy spell is not yet broken," cried Yeni, mastering his emotion.

"Much as my soul recoils at spilling the blood of Miamas, I feel I must comply with your hellish demand."

"I could not live," he continued, "to see the hour which would rob me of her whom I have so long, and so fondly loved."

Vanderdecken regarded his victim for a moment, then, with fierce bitterness, exclaimed—

"I shall not propitiate a renegade, you have joy and sorrow at your own disposal, so take your choice and let me at once know your determination?"

Yeni again wavered.

"Mark me," continued the Flying Dutchman, "I have no time to waste in idle parley. Let your decision be prompt, as mine will be certain."

"Wizard," cried Yeni, while his heart almost ceased to beat as he spoke, "I do yield me to your evil counsel."

"My brother," he continued, "shall fall beneath my murderous steel!"

"And the reward?"

"Shall be Sumach's hand."

"That I have already promised, and the word of Vanderdecken was never yet forfeited

Full fifty fathom beneath the ocean lay the abode of Vanderdecken, in the loadstone rock.

The cavern of the winds, in the realms of death.

This terrible place, surrounded by unscaleable precipices, appeared, from below and above, as some vast abyss of immeasurable depth and extent.

Its entrance consisted not in a single arch as usual, but was divided into two by a huge pillar of some mineral substance, which, rising from the bottom to the top of the refuge, seemed to lend its support to the roof, and forms, at the same time, a monstrous and double portal.

In this wild scene, lonely and hitherto undisturbed by the clang of any living creature, was soon heard the sound of voices earnestly engaged in conversation.

After a pause, the speakers appeared descending from the winding passage, and ultimately reached the centre of the cave.

The one was so stupefied with horror that he offered no resistance to the other, who seemed to lead him, as if he were blindfolded, through the intricacies of the secluded spot.

In these intruders could be recognised the forms of Vanderdecken and the Indian, Yeni.

"What think you of my dwelling?" said the Flying Dutchman, as he observed the wandering glances of his companion.

"Tis a place shunned by the red-man and the white, and I confess has terrors for the unflinching soul of Yeni."

"Yet do I dare walk in the unhallowed circle," returned Vanderdecken, "and even sleep by the magic spring. When young and innocent I longed to possess the divining powers of the ancient races, and invoked spirits to impart to me their hidden and impious knowledge."

"And the evil spirit heard your summons," said Yeni, his blood curdling as he listened.

"Hush!" said Vanderdecken, lowering his voice. "Vex him not with reproach; the foul fiend is with us—he hears us even now."

Yeni started.

"Come," continued his companion, "answer me. Could you be content to linger here, if my mystic power can protect you from all that is of malign influence."

"I could be happy with any lot Sumach shares," replied Yeni; "without her, a palace would be a desert."

"Then be happy, even where you are," exclaimed the Flying Dutchman, "for behold, faithful to my promise, your bride is here!"

As he spoke, Vanderdecken hastened towards a recess at the opposite end of the cavern, followed by Yeni.

Here, under a rude archway, radiant with frost-work, the Indian stood appalled, gazing on a block of ice, but so exquisitely moulded, that it pictured to his vivid imagination the semblance of a beautiful woman.

"Could I believe the evidence of my senses," he cried, "this frigid mass which rivets my wonderstricken eyes, and carved by no mortal, must have been once the form of a being sweet, gentle, and condescending in loveliness."

"'Tis Sumach herself, spell-bound and frozen!"

"Hast thou deceived me, wizard?" exclaimed Yeni, mournfully, "have you destroyed her for whom I have bartered myself to thee?"

So saying, the Indian advanced to the insensate statue of ice, whose countenance was revealed more fully by the glare of a lamp which hung above the head.

"Hold!" said Vanderdecken; "trust not yourself within the influence of that light, for should its fatal gleam once shine on your face you are lost, and become, even as her, a motionless image."

"Be it so," returned Yeni. "Let me meet grateful death by such means."

"Madman, you know not what you ask," said Vanderdecken. "Have patience, and listen to me. As soon as you have performed your promise the maiden will be restored to animation."

"Must I become a fratricide?"

"Yes," continued Vanderdecken, with a stern composure, even more frightful than his former impetuosity. "Within this wild retreat your brother must die by your dagger; here must he be found a livid and lifeless corpse, and beware of the consequences of disobedience."

The conversation of the speakers was now interrupted by the appearance of Hans Hinckman in the basaltic gallery of the cave.

He did not descend, but by various signs and contortions gave his master to understand that a stranger had by some means gained admittance.

"Ha!" exclaimed the lying Dutchman, "it is even as I anticipated; your brother has already succeeded in tracing me to my retreat, and an opportunity is thus offered for the execution of my design."

"But come," he continued, addressing Yeni, "retire with me for a few minutes; at a given signal you must rush upon your victim, and earn the rich reward I have promised."

As he spoke, he drew his companion into one of the deep chasms of the cavern, and allowed the intruder to advance without molestation.

Miamas approached the spot, which seemed to him a fit residence for despair and magical power.

He remained gazing for some time on the various objects that met his view, not from any impression of awe and wonder, but to obtain what silent intelligence they might impart.

These gave no trace of the object of his vain search, nor instruction how to proceed on his present purpose.

Looking, at length, through one of the gaps, the Indian observed a cruse of burning oil.

The instant after, his eye was cast on the beloved Sumach, standing beneath it.

His first impulse was to rush towards the spot; but, on perceiving her immovable attitude, he advanced with cautious step.

Before he could address her whom he had come to rescue, the gleam of the magic lamp fell fatally on his anxious face.

In a moment the blood of Miamas froze in his veins.

His limbs were stiffened with the rigidity of death.

He became, as Sumach, a statue of ice.

"It is accomplished," said the Flying Dutchman, issuing from his concealment, followed by Yeni.

"Behold!" he continued, pointing to the inanimate form of Miamas, "to what a helpless state thy enemy is reduced."

"His arm is nerveless now," said the Indian.

"And you must finish the work I have begun," was Vanderdecken's answer. "It remains for you to destroy the vital spark that yet lingers in your rival's heart."

Yeni paused.

"Do you still hesitate?" resumed the other. "Is your courage cooled within the brief space, that you cannot fulfil the oath you pledged to me scarce three hours since?"

"Wizard, you ask too much of me," exclaimed the Indian. "The stout heart that bears the white bear in the hunt, and the warrior in the battle, cannot shed a brother's blood!"

"Has not that brother wounded you in love? Injury inflicts a deeper wound than the sword. He whom you appear willing to spare, and who is now in your power, will doubtless show his gratitude for your mercy by again standing betwixt you and the being for whom you have bartered your eternal welfare."

"Wizard, I cannot do your bidding," replied the Indian; "the rage of the red-man turns to pity, when he beholds the helpless state of the enemy destined to fall by his murderous hand."

"Then you would meet him on equal terms," said Vanderdecken, whose countenance betrayed a malicious smile, "and run the hazard of losing your own life, that he might uninterruptedly enjoy the triumph he has already gained in supplanting you in the heart of Sumach."

"Ah, Sumach!" exclaimed Yeni, casting an ardent glance upon the maiden, and then fixing a look of deadly hate upon his brother, "she never can—she never shall be his!"

"Wizard," he continued, "you know how to touch the spring which impells the heart: the name of Sumach has again called up all fond and former recollections. Yeni shall have no rival!"

"Take your weapon in your right hand, and let your fingers clutch it with a vigorous grasp as you aim at the bosom of your victim."

"Remember," continued the Flying Dutchman, "Miamas once dead, thy term of misery also expires; joy will then smile upon your days, and the possession of Sumach will amply compensate the withering glances of unrequited love."

Yeni plucked his dagger from his girdle.

He grasped the messenger of death firmly in his hand.

"It is a bitter moment," he ejaculated; "yet, bitter as it is, I am tempted to brave the worst."

"Sumach will counteract the bitterness," whis-

pered the other, "and the anguish you have suffered will decay like sapless seaweed in a summer's sun."

Thus urged by Vanderdecken, Yeni advanced with upraised poignard to the frozen form before him.

The helplessness of Miamas again unnerved his arm.

The would-be fratricide dropped his weapon, and with a shriek, reeled back, and fell at the feet of the Flying Dutchman.

As the reader may conjecture, the wily plotter was quite unprepared for this unexpected interruption to his design, and was now at a loss how to proceed.

He first endeavoured to restore animation to the suffering Indian.

His efforts were useless.

Suddenly remembering that Hans Hinckman might aid in restoring the youth, he departed to seek him, but with what success remains to be seen.

The Indian for some minutes remained in a state of insensibility, but recovered in a short time consciousness.

While in this state he became aware of his terrible position; but his faintness continuing, he was unable to extricate himself from it.

By degrees, and with great exertion, he at length crawled near the spot on which, inert and death-like, stood his brother Miamas.

Muttering a prayer for forgiveness, the charm which disabled Yeni seemed instantly broken, and the leaden weight removed from his limbs.

His joints regained their suppleness, and, with a convulsive start, resembling that of a sleeper casting off a hideous dream, he was liberated from his thrall.

"I am once more free and alone," exclaimed Yeni, finding he was no longer in the presence of the doomed Vanderdecken.

"Brother," he continued, regarding his icy figure, "we meet no more with crimson hand and foot; well for us the wound is healed from whence that crimson was derived, and Yeni lives to make atonement for the past; to release you from the wizard must be his first task. Ha! the lamp."

Yeni recollects the effect the mystic luminary produced, and determined to profit by his knowledge.

Hastily advancing to the pedestal on which the cruse stood, he dislodged it, without the beams of the light falling on his face.

He had succeeded, for, removed from its station, the flame expired and gave life to the spell bound captives of the Flying Dutchman.

It is unnecessary to detail how Yeni assured Miamas and Sumach of the sincerity of his designs to save them, or how they readily assented to follow him through the intricacies of Vanderdecken's subterranean retreat; suffice, though their journey was attended with total darkness, it ended in light and liberty.

No sooner had the fugitives quitted the cave than Vanderdecken entered it.

He was now followed, or rather accompanied, by Hans Hinckman.

In a few words the former gave the history of the capture of their victims and its consequences.

"If these madmen be the idiots I take them to be," said the Flying Dutchman, "they will easily be taken in the trap set for them."

"The hawk pairs not with the dove," dryly remarked the manikin, "and guilt matches not with innocence."

"Away with this idle folly," said Vanderdecken,

"the prize is already in my hand, and the red-man, Yeni, must accomplish that which fate forbids us to perform."

"His strength fails him, you say," said Hans Hinckman, "our votaries should have strong hands and stouter hearts.

"Your knowledge of medicine will restore the irresolute fool, and my power the fulfilment of the design."

A voice sounded in the sepulchral hollow.

Those who listened started, looked around them, then gazed at each other.

In an instant Vanderdecken discovered the flight of the spell bound captives.

He regarded his companion narrowly, as if a suspicion had crossed his mind that he had possibly assisted in the mysterious escape.

The dwarf, exhibiting no emotion or the slightest appearance of treachery, was then addressed in the following words—

"Slave of my will, I command you, without a moment's loss, to intercept the career of those who have defied the Flying Dutchman."

"The destiny which has made me sovereign on the seas, and in the winds, gave me no power to divine the whereabouts of a love-sick damsel and two abject woosers."

"Their retreating footsteps on the soft path gives a sure token of the route they have taken."

"Vanderdecken rules my thoughts, my words," said Hans Hinckman, cringing before the party he addressed.

"Do you precede these runaways at a distance with a lighted torch," continued the Flying Dutchman, "and thus conduct them to the basaltic fissure leading to the dragon's haunt."

"The ocean tide is now rapidly rising," rejoined the dwarf, "and the dreaded reptile will soon reach the lair."

"So much the better," exclaimed Vanderdecken, "it will prevent their escape from the horrible tomb which they have chosen for themselves."

"Away, away," he continued, "strictly follow my injunction, or dread the penalty of disobedience."

Hans Hinckman quitted his master to perform the bidding, but left him to meditate on a scheme that could hardly be paralleled for atrocity.

CHAPTER XX.

YENI ATTACKS THE DRAGON IN ITS OCEAN CAVERN.

The fugitives, deprived of light and placed in a very uncertain situation, pursued their way through the pitchy darkness that surrounded them.

Huge masses over which they scrambled, blocks which were to be climbed on one side with much labour and pain, for the purpose of an equally precarious descent on the other, were surmounted, to be further interrupted by greater obstacles and deeper obscurity.

Perfect gloom, solemn silence, and endless difficulty at length gave way to despair, and the light-footed Indians awaited, in horror, the issue of their dangerous enterprise.

They were not doomed to a long suspense for the next moment brought to their ears a wild cry.

It seemed neither human nor earthly, and not only penetrating the recesses of the cave, but to the innermost hearts of those who heard it.

It was followed by a stillness almost as awful as the sound itself.

"What is that?" murmured Sumach, in a tremulous whisper.

Neither Miamas nor Yeni made any reply.

They listened, as if expecting the cry would be repeated, and with a manner that expressed their own astonishment.

After a lengthened pause, Miamas spoke—

"What it was, or what it was not, none here can tell. I have ranged, from boyhood, the wilds and these desolate shores, and believed that there was no cry I had not heard; but this has proved that Miamas is only a vain and conceited mortal."

"What see you?" asked Yeni, observing a restless movement in his brother.

The answer was short, and given in the Indian tongue.

"There is some one emerging with a light from the dark abyss."

"Can you distinguish the features?"

"No; be it a friend or enemy, for the present our hiding place must still be in the darkness."

While Miamas was yet uttering these words, the form of a man was revealed to his view.

And, as he had asserted, bearing a torch in his hand.

A wild burst of unearthly laughter on the part of this individual filled the Indian with new dread.

"It is Hans Hinckman," exclaimed Sumach, "our worst enemy or our best friend."

"You are in no danger from me," replied the dwarf, who had overheard the remark; "I have already told you I owe him who calls me his slave a grudge."

"Is this man to be trusted," thought Miamas, "he has some mischievous design in appearing thus before us."

"So far from bearing enmity to the wizard it was he I believe who assisted him last night," continued Yeni.

The Indians had now come up with Hans Hinckman.

"What is your purpose here?" they asked of the dwarf.

"To lead you from this place to one of safety," he answered.

"Is it not to sacrifice us at thine own impious rites?" rejoined Sumach.

"When I have saved you, you will have a better opinion of me," said Hans Hinckman.

"Your escape," he continued, will partially gratify my vengeance on Vanderdecken, the Flying Dutchman, as the children of clay choose to call him."

"Have you no fear of this terrible being?"

The dwarf made no reply to this question, which he evaded by remarking—

"I will get you out of his clutches, be the consequence what it may to myself."

The dwarf, having in a measure overcome the scruples of his companions, now descended the deep escarpment at his feet, apparently with perfect ease and security.

Arrived at the bottom, he beckoned to those he had left at the summit to follow him.

The summons was tacitly and not without difficulty obeyed.

Having proceeded for some distance, Hans Hinckman abruptly stopped in the pathway, and commanded those he was guiding to remain where they were or retrace their footsteps.

Plunging his torch with force into the ground, he suddenly, and somewhat mysteriously, disappeared.

The minute after a dull booming sound was heard, then the roar of heaven's artillery.

The sides of the chasm were rent in a thousand places, and from the yawning cliffs issued a resistless torrent of the neighbouring ocean.

The water, rising breast high, fell upon the devoted Sumach and her companions, who, like herself, were petrified and speechless with fear.

An appalling sight was it now, to behold the struggling victims battle with the sombre waves, whose dark tinge, stained by the ruddy glare of the blazing brand, gave the sea a hue of blood.

The wild despairing cry of the Indian maid, the crashing burst of the furious sea, is outvied by a scream of triumph.

It is the voice of Fergus Blake that brings help where help was deemed impossible.

With a firm hand and steady resolution, the bold seaman was soon observed guiding a ponderous raft of ice.

Plunging fearlessly into the boiling flood, he grasped the drowning wretches, and dragged them, one by one, from their peril, to the frozen block.

In this way they were borne to the mouth of the cave with the speed of lightning, and cast upon the bosom of the open ocean.

A prayer of thanksgiving was offered up; but those who knelt to pray had scarcely finished their orisons, when a new calamity assailed them.

The brave Miamas was no longer on the raft, while the form of Hans Hinckman presented itself upon the spot upon which the Indian had been standing.

Flashes of fire glanced in the dwarf's eye, and the malice of a demon was imprinted on his countenance, as he shouted, in a voice that seemed to burst the ears—

"If you would learn the fate of your missing companion, go seek to learn it in the Dragon's Haunt!"

Let us now pass to the Indians' encampment.

The warriors are arranging themselves in an extended circle, while the most distinguished of their chiefs have placed themselves on the earth a little in advance.

A long deep silence succeeds the ultimate formation of the gathering.

At length, one whose hair was beginning to be sprinkled with a robe of grey, but whose sinewy limbs and firm tread announced that he was still equal to the arduous duties of manhood, advanced from out the gloom of a corner, and spoke.

"Warriors!" exclaimed Manitto, for he it was, "let the Great Spirit hear our prayer! let the red-man acknowledge that this terrible visitation is brought upon the land by the wickedness of its people, and like the doom of the Yengese of old, they had mocked the messenger of God, and despised his word!"

The speaker paused; every eye was bent on his person, as if to inquire into the result of the annunciation.

"Let them acknowledge this," continued Manitto, "and success may attend him who has the courage to sacrifice himself, or achieve the utter extirpation of the monster who threatens the general destruction."

The exhortation produced a powerful effect upon the hearers.

They arose, some with wondering, others with terrified looks.

Before proceeding further, it may be desirable to show how far the ravages of the terrible Kracken had extended, and how the destroyer environed the arctic lands, like the besieging army of a beleaguered city.

Neither the hunter or huntress dare venture abroad in search of game.

The wigwams of the Indians, and the council-

fire of their chiefs, had to be guarded night and day.

The crew of the El Malachor shared a similar fate to their red brethren, and were compelled to use similar means, to prevent any outbreak upon them by the ferocious dragon of the Northern seas.

This monster added desolation to terror; his presence was so poisonous and contagious, that a plague raged with other horrors among the panic-stricken victims, leaving the dead to outnumber the living.

The impressive address of Manitto was followed by a sound in the adjacent region, and Yeni, with firm and piercing eyes, burst in upon the startled Indians.

Breathless, and heavily oppressed with the critical position of his brother, he spoke not of the escape of himself and companions from Hans Hinckman, but forced his way to the chief, who was still standing in the midst of the tribe.

Horror and resolution struggled fearfully in the lineaments of his face as he gasped out—

"Bring me the Narraganset! my speed must leave the winds behind me! The horse, I say! swift as speech, or as my heart is beating!"

"Miamas is slain!" he continued, in seeming agony. "If I hasten not to his rescue, his blood is on my soul! Yeni lured him to danger, it must be Yeni to perish with or save him!"

"Where would he go?" was the general exclamation.

"To the eternal river of the dead—to the yawning gulf of Tartarus! Two hours since I left Miamas exposed to the fierce attacks of the direful dragon of the Northern seas!"

"Warrior," returned Manitto, "I fear you will fall a prey to the fierce monster against whom you are about to try your prowess."

"It may be so," replied Yeni. "But, though his poisoning fangs eat into my heart, I will seek him in his murky den, and, with the aid of the Great Spirit, will abide the issue of a contest that ends in my destruction or the deliverance of my captive brother!"

The Narraganset, or war-horse of the White Beavers, was now brought forward, and merited the eulogium of his rider as he vaulted into the saddle.

Despite the remonstrances of the by-standers, who deemed Yeni's challenge to the dread monster an impious act, he seized the bridle, and commenced his route by plunging forward in the direction of the Dragon's Haunt.

He soon disappeared like a vanishing phantom from those who witnessed his departure, hurrying onwards with surprising speed, notwithstanding the difficulties the path presented.

The one-armed heel of Yeni goaded not the flanks of the faithful beast, whom by instinct seemed to discover that a portentous sequel hung upon his uncurbed flight.

A few miles hard riding brought Yeni to his journey's end.

The rapid motion had a tendency to revive the dormant faculties of the over-exhausted Indian.

Gaining the flattened surface of a dizzy precipice, Yeni at once recognised the inauspicious abode of the Kracken.

Curiosity, which seemed inseparable from disgust, induced him to gaze at the sickening sight which met his gaze.

The monster's cruel work was still unchecked.

On every side were bones and flesh, torn from the bodies of the victims of the relentless persecutor.

Streaming rivulets of blood, and gory blocks of

ice presented themselves at whatever point the eye turned.

Mangled forms—nay, very corpses, without the usual cerements, were discovered in uncovered graves, or lying with festering pestilence in ghastly heaps.

Amidst these accumulating horrors, appalled, yet partly restored to himself, Yeni dismounted, and, by an unaccountable fascination, was drawn farther into the charnel-house.

Here a new terror burst upon him, while cold drops of sweat hung on his brows at the fearful spectacle of which he was the sole witness.

Fastened to a basaltic column, the Indian found his unfortunate brother Miamas.

He was loaded with chains, whose rusty links had bared in several places his bones, which seemed to protude through the open wounds.

A glimmering light passed through the entrance, and gave this terrible object the appearance of some marble figure.

It was the well known form of Miamas.

Yeni paused for a moment, knelt then clasped the icy hand outstretched towards him.

"He lives," cried Yeni, in a voice which made him who listened shake with greater terror. "Even in the very crisis to have come. Had I arrived an hour before, I should not have felt this agony of joy."

"Brother, I fear you have come too late," murmured Miamas faintly, "the arrow of death is piercing my brain, and rushing to my heart."

"Courage. I am resolved to save you."

Yeni spoke these words, and the next minute had released his brother from the fetters that bound him.

"You are a prisoner no longer," he continued, "your safety—my happiness—demands your instant freedom, and I have formed a scheme for our liberty which boldly executed, cannot fail."

"I have not strength to move a limb," said Miamas.

"The Narraganset shall bear you, like a fallow deer, through the intricacies of this terrible cave, which we must quit instantly."

As Yeni turned to loosen the tether of his horse, a large black ball which at first seemed stationary, now began to move in a manner that was inexplicable.

Its restless, sideling attitudes at once convinced its observer that it was some beast of prey.

Though this creature growled loudly and fiercely, and there were instants when its glistening eyeballs might be seen, it gave no other indication of hostility.

Yeni, regarding it for some moments, at length seemed assured that the intentions of this intruder were peaceable, and, without hesitation, leaped on the back of the Narraganset.

The horse's eye glared round on his master as he leant forward and called the animal cheerfully by its name.

It knew the kind voice, and raised its ears which, till now, were laid flat back.

The Indian placed his hand upon the back of the beast, and withdrew it suddenly, wet with perspiration.

"The instinct of the brute, excels the reason of the man," he exclaimed, as if struck with a startling conviction; "there is danger near that I have not anticipated."

These words had scarcely left the lips of the horse-man, when he perceived the object he had noticed rolling along his path.

The next moment it became fully revealed, and the sombre mass changed to a monstrous and most forbidding reptile.

It's tongue was lolling out.

White tusks glared from a blood-stained mouth.

A greenish foam scattered itself like flowing lava over a breast, broad, scaled and slimy.

- Yeni at once knew that his enemy was the odious kracken, the dragon of the Northern seas.

In a moment his polished axe was seen to glisten, as he whirled it above his head.

A bright gleam shot from his hand.

It was the tomahawk in its passage.

The quick and ready aim of the Indian was not too late.

His keen weapon was buried in the throat of his noxious adversary.

The scream that rent the air resembled that of a body of martyrs, to whose flesh had been applied red hot pinchers.

Yeni beheld his triumph with a grateful heart, which, while it leapt in his throat for joy, swelled with resolution to follow up his advantage.

Though tottering and weak, from the loss of blood, the dragon again advanced to the attack.

His eyes resembled a sheet of glowing and fiery coal.

Hiss, the tempestuous fury of the maelstrom.

The Indian watched his enemy with features that seemed superior to every emotion.

Marble could not be colder, calmer, or steadier than the countenance he put on, as he placed his body entirely on the defensive, but prepared, if the opportunity offered, to act again as the aggressor.

There was something appalling in the silence which ensued between the combatants, as they watched each other, waiting, as it were, for death.

The scared steed of Yeni at length made a headlong plunge, while he himself aimed a tremendous blow at the startled monster, who suddenly drawing back avoided it.

Stumbling the horse threw its rider, and swept away at a tremendous pace.

The Indian was now alone and prostrate.

The dragon spread its wings to dart upon his enemy, who, appeared at this moment entirely at his mercy.

In doing this he exposed the only vulnerable part of his body.

A mortal wound from the upraised poignard of the Indian forced his foe to seek retreat in his cave.

Yeni was about to follow, when a well known voice called upon him to desist.

The next moment an explosion shook the surrounding region from one end to the other.

The place sank as into a gulph.

The vaulted roof of the kracken's haunt fell.

Its pillars bowed down, its destruction was accomplished, and the dreaded dragon destroyed.

Miamas, who had witnessed the issue of the contest, had possessed himself of a pine torch, which he lighted as he observed the monster enter his abode; this he then hurled into its confined air, and thus caused the desolation that has been above described.

CHAPTER XXI.

TIDINGS OF PAUL JONES.

Fortune, who seems at times to own a conscience, owed the brave Paul Jones some amends, and, accordingly, we find him located in a solitary snow hut, surrounded by vast white deserts of the Polar Sea.

The floating mass on which they had been cast was drifted by the tide to the dreary, snow-clad, and not inhospitable shore that now gave them shelter, comfort and food.

- Let us peep for a moment at the territory, continents, and dwelling of the outcasts, situated beneath a remarkable iceberg, little less than two hundred feet in height, surmounted by two white cupola-shaped hummocks.

Temporary openings in the water, surrounded on all sides by ice are filled with fish, and flocks of wild fowl hovering in the air, provide daily a luxuriant meal to the otherwise forlorn mariners.

The further discovery of the wreck of a large vessel supplied, in a measure, their every actual want.

The singular way in which this unlooked-for assistance arrived, will be best described by the words of Brandy-nosed Nick, when he informed Paul Jones of his day's adventure.

"Here I am," said he, "returned to port safe and sound, and a rare voyage of discovery I have had of it."

"Something told me," he continued, "when I started out this morning, to hunt out old bruin, that paid us a visit yesterday, that I should meet with luck."

"What have you run foul of?" asked his companion.

"May I never see old England again, but I've captured a whole mine of Spanish gold! Here—here's enough to pay off all the drowned ship's crew for a whole voyage."

As he spoke, Brandy-nosed Nick put down the gun he carried over his shoulder, and opened a wallet at his side, which appeared full.

"Where did you find this?" said Paul Jones, eagerly examining the contents of the bag.

"Steering through an ice-pass, some two miles distant, I came upon what appeared to me an old wreck.

"I was right in my 'wreckoning,'" continued Nick, enjoying his attempt at a pun. "It was a Spanish vessel that has been lost in this infernal climate about a twelemonth ago."

"How do you know that?"

"Why, having boarded the ship, I overhauled the log, and found observations and reckonings up to within this year."

"Did you discover any provisions?"

"Lots, and a cask or two of real Jamaica; I've filled my flask with a sample of the liquor; it's quite to my liking. That reminds me I haven't taking a draught since I've been speaking to you, and talking you know is dry work."

Brandy-nosed Nick here produced the flash he had spoken of, and, to make up for his late omission, absorbed a larger quantity of moisture than usual.

"Then the unfortunate crew—"

"Have most likely gone to Davy Jones," interrupted the previous speaker. "I didn't meet with a centipede or even a lilliputian rat on or between decks."

"Then you came upon nothing that would lead you to suppose that man had once trod the vessel's planks?"

"Yes, I did," replied Nick. "There was plenty of gold in the lockers and chests, and where that metal exists you may depend upon it human beings of some kind have been in the neighbourhood."

"That which is contained in my wallet," he continued, "is a part of the spoil."

"That which buys men and life," returned Paul Jones, "is as useless as dross in the arctic regions."

"Yes," said Nick, "there's no banks here for depositing money, or slopsellers one can spend it at."

"There are no vestiges then of the brave hearts that perished in this ice-bound ship?" asked Paul Jones, musing.

"Yes, one," said the other seaman, as a tear started in his eye. "I was scudding along close in shore, thinking of this, that, and t'other, and forgot for a moment we'd been cast away on this darned cold shore, when all of a sudden, I was taken right aback with the sight of a body lying on its face before me."

"It was a sailor boy," continued Nick, brushing away a trickling drop on his cheek with the cuff of his skin-jacket. "At first I thought it was poor Goncalvi, who became separate from us on the ice drift; but the hair was not so long as his and of a different colour."

"Well, well," said Paul Jones, with impatience, "how did you proceed?"

"Very slowly," rejoined Nick, in contradistinction to his flask, which passed now rapidly to his mouth.

"I crept closer, and closer," he continued, "till I reached the lad. I wished to turn him and look at his face, but I trembled so I couldn't; however I did turn it and found it was a stranger."

Paul Jones turned gloomy but made no remark, while Nick took another pull at his liquor, which, by the way, during the whole time he was speaking he had entirely forgotten to hand to his companion.

"I cut off a lock of the poor fellow's hair," he added, "dug a grave in the ice, and buried the body."

"I think," said Nick, concluding his narration with stifled emotion, "that the prayers I said, and the tears I shed on the melancholy occasion were quite as good as those of the best chaplain of the English fleet."

"Give me that lock of hair," said Paul Jones, "and follow me—there is a mystery about it I think I can solve."

Paul Jones had hardly received the memento from the hands of Nick, and both entered their snow-hut, than a figure was seen to approach it.

Its head was turned every now and then, as though anxious for the appearance of some one.

The melancholy air, the measured step, and gloomy mien of the man who advanced to and watched the rude dwelling of the late speakers, would have left no doubt of his person in the minds of those individuals had they observed him.

Prudence soon urged him to retire.

He moved cautiously to the back of the snow-hut for that purpose.

Another sound now attracted his attention, and once more arrested his footsteps.

It was a low, and almost inaudible movement of the adjacent water, succeeded by a grating of pieces of ice, with which it was covered, one against the other.

In a moment, he saw a canoe, with several men in it, near a landing-place.

One of these rose, as it were, out of the lake, and stole without further noise to within a few feet of the spot where he himself stood.

This secret visitant proved to be no other than the pirate chief, Rotaldo.

He advanced to the hut with a cautious step, then clambered up to the summit.

The instant he had gained it, he made a gesture for silence to those he had left in the canoe, and slid down with the utmost precipitation.

"Paul Jones is here, then," the Spaniard whispered, "and the information I received from the scouts has once more placed in my hand the enemy I thought destroyed; he must not escape me a second time."

With these words Rotaldo returned to the boat, and imparted to his companions the discovery he had made.

A consultation was then held as to the best mode

of surprising or capturing the parties they had come upon so singularly.

It was agreed that Rotaldo should arm himself, proceed to the hut and demand admittance, while the rest were ordered to make the circuit of the dwelling, to prevent the inmates doing any great mischief.

Like sportsmen in readiness for their game, the pirates hurried forward, and each one took up his assigned post.

Their leader stole cautiously, and with a beating heart, to the crevice, through which the faint light of a fire was glimmering.

For a moment he hesitated at the door.

Fear and distrust caused him to linger, while impatience on the part of his followers, seemed to cause the Spaniard to meditate more deeply than before.

Chafed by the silent imputations of the others, and inwardly troubled by his own unaccountable reflections, he placed his musket between his eyes, and directed it towards the hut.

Before it could be discharged, another hand was on the lock.

It was that of the solitary, who had lately watched the pirates as they had arrived at the spot.

"Ah," exclaimed Rotaldo, who had been so unexpectedly interrupted, "who art thou?"

"I am one who has endured trials which might have dignified the history of a martyr," he returned. "I have faced danger and death in various shapes, and have undergone toil and fatigue from which men of the stoutest frame would have sunk."

There was silence after these words, during which the speaker waved off the other pirates, who had come to their comrade's rescue.

"I neither know, nor care to know you," said Rotaldo, peering into the face of the intruder, and surveying him from head to foot, "and I only marvel that I strike you not at my feet for your temerity."

"I can forgive your spleen," answered the addressed, "since I have prevented you taking vengeance on your foe, Paul Jones."

"He is a foe, and a deadly one, if you knew what I have suffered at his hands," echoed the Spaniard.

"So is thy enemy mine, and I doubt not if our wrongs were put in the balance, that those of the man who confronts you would outweigh your own."

"Yet your spare him, it seems out of common humanity."

"Common humanity," shouted the other, with a scornful laugh, that sounded like as hriek, "where did you get that catchword, the noose for woodcocks, the paltry disguise for man-traps, the bait which the fool who swallows will soon find covers a hook with barbs, ten times sharper than those he lays for the animal he murders."

"Why, have you stepped between me and the man you say you hate?"

"Because, his time for dying has not yet arrived, and when it comes, it is for me, not you, to send a brace of bullets through his brain."

"Ho, ho," exclaimed Rotaldo, "you talk bravely to one who is little used to have his will disputed."

"You forget," he continued, "that my followers here, at my slightest nod, would not hesitate to rush upon and slay you. You should have thought, also, of the danger of entrusting yourself unarmed to the fury of a desperate and disappointed man."

"You are mistaken, Senor Rotaldo," replied the other, "I am not defenceless."

"With this weapon," he continued laying his hand on a long dagger concealed beneath his garment. "I can, if necessary, guard the vital spark enclosed in this poor trunk, against any number that shall threaten me with injury."

THE FROZEN CREW OF THE ICE-BOUND SHIP



THE PIRATES HUNT THE WALRUS.—*Vide Chapter XXIV.*

At a signal from Rotaldo, his comrades advanced. The next moment the late speaker found himself enclosed in a grasp that might have vied with the far-famed power of the bear's hug itself.

Turning his head, he beheld his two arms pinned to his side by the iron muscles of the negro pirate, Caesar.

Rotaldo, in a moment, caught up a thong of buck-

skin, rushed upon the captive, and, with the assistance of the others, effectually secured him.

Arms, legs and feet, were encircled in twenty folds of the thong.

"From what place did this imp spring?" asked the Spaniard, when the work was finished. "Not a soul has passed since our arrival."

The pirates shook their heads significantly, while De'il Rob, one of their number, pointed to the door.

"No, it has not been open to my certain knowledge," said Rotaldo. "How the devil he came into these latitudes at all is beyond my comprehension; do any of you know him?"

The pirates again, by their previous actions, replied in the negative.

"He is some spy, depend upon it," observed the Spaniard, "and I shall presently make him find his tongue. But for the present, lash him to yonder projection, while we make sure of our victim, Paul Jones."

This mandate was at once complied with.

The prisoner yielded in silence, and appeared utterly helpless.

Rotaldo regarded him for a moment as if to ascertain that he was entirely deprived of means of resistance, then ordered the pirates to again surround the hut as before, while he advanced to it himself.

He twice extended his hand to the door, and twice withdrew it.

At length the Spaniard made the effort.

His knock did not equal in violence the throb of his own bosom.

His next effort was louder, but receiving no answer, he called upon Paul Jones by his name and requested him to answer and open to him.

"What miserable being is induced to seek shelter here?" said a voice from within."

"I come to you in an hour of adversity," said Rotaldo, disguising his person and intention; "the door of Paul Jones should not be closed to the cry of distress by an old messmate."

The speaker heard the inmate stir in his hut, and presently afterwards strike a light.

One by one, bolts and bar were withdrawn, and the heart of Rotaldo throbbed higher as the obstacles to the meeting with his enemy were removed.

The door opened, and a figure stood before him.

It was not that of Paul Jones, but Hans Hinckman.

The uncouth form and features of the dwarf were illuminated by the iron lamp which he held in his hand.

"Heavens! where did you come from?" exclaimed the thunderstricken Spaniard.

"A pretty question, truly," replied Hans Hinckman. "Hast thou not heard it said that I have leagued myself with the evil powers?

"Hast thou not heard this?" he continued, "and yet do you seek my cell at midnight?"

"Then where is Paul Jones?" asked the Spaniard, assuming a firm tone. "It is he, not you I have sought in this secluded ice-dell."

A sudden cry at this moment warned Rotaldo that the prisoner lately taken had gained his freedom.

Disengaging himself from his bonds, he had dashed up a precipice, from the summit of which he addressed those who were hastily ascending.

"Fools! follow me not, nor seek further your victim, Paul Jones; he has escaped your machinations."

"He was set free by me," continued the fugitive, "by me, Vanderdecken, the Flying Dutchman!"

These words were listened to with lips asunder and eyes riveted.

After a short pause, a flash of lightning of such dazzling brilliancy shot down past the pirates, that they remained for some moments almost blinded.

When these terror-stricken men had recovered their powers of vision, the phantom skipper had vanished into air.

CHAPTER XXII.

HOW GONZALVI WAS LURED TO THE GROTTO AND WHAT TOOK PLACE WHEN HE ARRIVED THERE.

The day following that on which the incidents related in the last chapter took place, a wanderer broke the solitude of one of the remotest passes of the arctic circle.

He was a seaman, in savage masquerade, and on his return from hunting, a sport to which those who visit the snowy lands are generally attached, notwithstanding its dangers and fatigues.

This sailor's jacket and trousers, though in ragged trim, were not exposed to the eye, being covered with a general coating of white bear-skin.

A musket was swinging behind his shoulders, a sword, unconscious of a scabbard, drooped at his side, while a pair of pistols completed his accoutrements.

Having said thus much, let the reader picture to himself in this individual, Brandy-nosed Nick.

"The game has fled this infernal country I think," said he, trudging along the lonely track he was following. "I have been as far as the ice mount on the frozen sea, and the devil of a bird or beast can I see this morning, if I except three red woodraes that never let me get within shot of them, though I steered a good mile to windward."

"I shouldn't care so much for myself," continued the speaker, "only I wanted some venison for Paul Jones. Poor fellow, I can't make him out of late; he seems to get more dull and gloomy every day. Why, only last night he swore we were carried away by the Flying Dutchman; whether we were or not I can't say, because I never remember anything after my twenty-fourth glass."

With such sentiments as these, Nick passed a narrow cutting, leading into one of the snow-fields of the inhospitable region.

Thither he was about to cross, when his attention was caught by a singular figure.

It seemed at first some man or a beast, yet had the appearance of neither; but when the shaggy jaws and rugged head of the opponent were fully exposed to the gaze of the seaman, he at once recognised the huge white bear he had encountered a day or so previously.

To the dismay of Nick, he found that his powder-flask by some accident had become empty.

However, emboldened by an artificial courage derived from a copius draught of rum which, in his economy, he had stored for special occasions, the seaman determined to attack and pursue the enemy within his view.

"If I can't get venison," said he, "I will at least provide Paul Jones with a frugal meal of dried bear's meat, or bruin shall make a meal of me."

Armed only with his unsheathed cutlass, Nick resolutely set out on his adventurous exploit.

A fatiguing journey over a yielding surface of snow and broken hummocks, brought him within a yard of the grizzly foe.

This grizzly foe, to the surprise of his antagonist, undauntedly faced him, and seemed, by unmistakable signs, to invite him to the combat.

The courage of Nick now oozed out of his finger ends.

This sudden decadency was partly occasioned by evaporation of the stimulus, and partly by the undismayed and even threatening aspect of the bear.

The seaman levelled his weapon in an attitude suited either for offensive or defensive action, and stood still, watching the animal.

The bear pursued similar tactics.

Nick tried in vain to rally his drooping courage to make the attack.

His enemy was too formidable.

His appearance too imposing.

The former shouted uselessly, advanced his sword, and made feints of attack.

The latter, either not understanding, or despising such unmanliness, obstinately stood his ground.

Already the limbs of the seaman began to quiver, and yet he could not, with safety to himself, retreat.

Bruin, after some time spent in this tedious ambuscade, possessing less reflection, or being regardless of consequences, began with audacious boldness to advance.

The nigh approach of the animal, and his unshaken step, subdued the spark of bravery that Nick had hitherto upheld, and, turning tail, he ignominiously let go the painter, cut and run.

The moment of peril had now arrived.

The flight caused pursuit, and the bear, being better practised in snow travelling, and better provided for it, soon gained rapidly upon the fugitive.

His sword becoming an encumbrance, he threw it down, and still kept on his retreat.

This circumstance was a fortunate one for the now breathless Nick.

His weapon excited the bear's attention.

The brute stopped, pawed it, and then renewed the chase.

He was soon again at the heels of the panting runner, who, conscious of the favourable effect of the sword, dropped one of his snow-mittens.

The stratagem succeeded, and the bear again stopped to examine the fallen glove.

Nick had—improving on these intervals—made considerable progress ahead.

Bruin continued the hunt with most provoking perseverance.

It was again arrested by the other mitten, and, finally, the fur cap of the seaman.

The latter article of dress was an object that raised unmitigated fury in the enraged animal.

It was torn into shreds between his fore paws and teeth, and the incautious adventurer would have become a victim, had not a friendly iceberg afforded him assistance, and a pool of running water destroyed the scent.

Brandy-nosed Nick, in eluding his late persecutor, too soon discovered that he had strayed from the direct route.

He was too exhausted to proceed, and therefore sought a shelter where he could repose, till returning strength would permit him to resume his perilous journey homewards.

In a few minutes he came upon a place which seemed, by its appearance, likely to offer him an assured retreat; at least, it was the best he could find to answer his purpose under existing circumstances.

The abode in which the seaman intended to take refuge, was one of those beautiful stalactite grottoes of which travellers have spoken with rapture, when exploring the lands adjacent both to the Northern and Southern poles.

As Brandy-nosed Nick surveyed the wondrous work of nature, whose prismatic colours checkered

with rainbow tints the surrounding darkness, he could not repress a feeling of admiration mingled with one of awe.

This impression was shortly and suddenly to be effaced by the sound of approaching footsteps.

Mechanically drawing back behind a huge block of spar, he saw, without being himself observed, two figures enter by the narrow opening of the grotto.

He could hardly stifle an exclamation of surprise, as he beheld in one of the intruders his long lost messmate, Gonzalvi.

Curiosity and prudence had tied his tongue, and, with something like apprehension, he scrutinised the youth's companion, who was no other than Corah, the Indian Queen.

To this retreat, apparently, they had strayed to be free from interruption.

The features of Gonzalvi were overcast.

Those of his mistress were lighted by a soft smile.

Drawing the former to a rude seat, such as the cavern afforded, Corah produced from her bosom a pine torch, strongly girded with gnatoo, or Indian hemp.

Fire, struck from a flint, arrayed the grot with light.

It was wide, high, and possessed a self-born gothic canopy.

The arch, architrave, and buttress, seemed formed by some earthquake, and hardened by earth-absorbing fire.

While glistening stalactites, tinged by the flaming brand, shed glowing colours upon the broken and vast expanse.

"What think you, love, of this wild recess?" said Corah, as she pressed Gonzalvi to her impassioned breast.

The youth surveyed with wonder the place, and with a gaze ill-suited to the soft caress of her who awaited in silence his reply.

"Have I over-rated this delightful retreat?" she continued, after a pause.

"It is, indeed, one of the choicest works of the great creator!" muttered Gonzalvi; "neither man's hand nor art could have so curiously, so divinely contrived it."

"No, here the rapturous bosom may pour forth its strains of ardent love.

"Here we can mingle soft sighs," continued Corah, "here, bid the throbbing heart lie still; for all that imagination or affection can picture, may in this elysium be realized."

"Good heavens! how imprudent I have acted, to stray hither with this woman," thought Gonzalvi.

"You do not answer me," she said, "but appear as cold as the very icicles, which fringe this grotto."

"Come," resumed Corah, "let me tell, I love thee beyond any earthly being my eyes ever yet beheld. You will return it, will you not?"

"I cannot—dare not."

"How, slighted! my proffered love refused! Who is there that, whenever Corah, the Queen of the white beaver tribe, named her commands, would hesitate to obey them?"

The woman who pronounced this tirade might well have represented, so far as features, stature, and voice were concerned, the Boadicea of the Britons, or the Egyptian Potiphar's wife.

Her face was still handsome, though exposed to the ravages of time, and the effects of the severe weather of the country.

As Corah threw back her cloak from her shoulders, a sort of jacket, stamped with figures in gold, became visible, and her girdle, bearing an ambiguous weapon shaped like a knife, next armed her hand.

With such appearances, Gonzalvi could only look upon his fitful companion with horror and dread.

"Pardon me—my youth—my inexperience!" he exclaimed, tremblingly. "I entreat you to let me return to my comrades."

"Do you reject my favours?"

"I—I—"

"Answer me—Corah will not be trifled with. She does no work by halves. Like the raging ocean, she engulfs the enemy she strangles, and affords those she has dealt on their death and sepulchre, at once."

"I must reject."

"Tis enough," interrupted Corah, "you quit not the grotto alive."

"Heavens! you would not kill me!"

"Yes; on this spot you perish! Behold! I am ready to inflict the blow."

As Corah spoke, her knife was seen to glitter in the air.

For an instant the steel was suspended over the head of the victim.

Uttering a loud cry, Gonzalvi threw himself at the feet of the amazon, and implored mercy.

"Retract what you have said, and I may yet spare you," exclaimed Corah, in a more kindly tone.

"Oh, if you knew all," the youth replied with deep emotion, "you would indeed pity the unhappy Gonzalvi."

"Corah knows not pity—she deals the death-meant blow, and smiles upon the wounded foe—she tears the reeking scalp from his head, and looks with composure and delight at him writhing in agonies.

"Such will be your fate," continued the Indian Queen. "Pity said you? When Corah is slighted, she knows only revenge."

"But do you not fear that my comrades—"

"I laugh at it."

"They will discover—"

"Here, within this crystal vault, your bones shall lie and rot," interrupted Corah. Here, on ground which was ne'er imprinted by the foot of man, but yours, this secret retreat known only to myself, who then can trace you here.

"You might have perished by some beast of prey," she continued; "the frost of death might have nipped you, for such your associates will conclude. These circumstances, common in a sterile soil, will place me beyond the eye of suspicion or the hand of vengeance."

"And have I no hope?"

"None in this world."

"By the duty you owe your husband, by the spirit of your father's, by the kindred whose blood is dear to you, I conjure you suffer me to depart."

"What! to speak of Corah's disgrace, to point at her with contempt. No, my pride can never brook such reproach; this moment, boy, is your last, and this good steel must search your heart.

The Indian's weapon was again upraised.

The blade descended.

In an instant, Gonzalvi was deluged in blood.

"Avast; murderer!" shouted a voice, it was that of Brandy-nosed Nick; "attempt to stir, and damme I'll make a hole through you."

With the words, the seaman levelled his pistol at the head of Corah, who seemed paralysed at so singular an intrusion.

CHAPTER XXIII.

GONZALVI'S ESCAPE

It would be needless to dwell upon the cordial greeting Brandy-nosed Nick gave his newly found messmate, or the sympathy he showed towards him on discovering he was badly wounded; therefore we pro-

ceed at once to narrate the circumstances which followed on the malevolent act of Corah.

She had no sooner recovered her surprise, than she conceived an idea by which she might encompass her enemies without danger to herself.

Before the seaman could prevent it, the Indian had extinguished the torch.

The total darkness leaving the one to calculate in silent alarm, the actions of the other.

Brandy-nosed Nick laid his charge gently on the ground, then supporting himself on his palms, gazed on all sides, as if anticipating a sudden attack from every quarter of the dark abode, and preparing to resist it if possible.

In the extremity of horror, he fancied he saw the knife descending, without being able to ward off its blow.

He was no coward, but under these horrible circumstances his usual firmness forsook him.

Manhood melted from him, like wax in a furnace, and he felt his hair individually bristle.

How long he continued in this suspense, he could never pretend to guess; but he was aroused by a sound so loud that it shook the grotto.

The truth at once flashed upon the mind of the prisoner.

The treacherous enemy had blocked up the entrance by an iceberg, and consigned to an awful tomb the unfortunate victims of her malice.

Even this terrible doom was a relief to Brandy-nosed Nick, who, conscious of the disappearance of Corah, seemed once more able to grapple with and surmount the difficulties that beset him.

He paused for a moment, and wiped from his brow the cold perspiration, with which the presence of the late individual had covered it.

"So the old catamaran has left us to amuse ourselves with grinning through this icy prison," exclaimed the seaman; "left us to stay here till we gnaw our bones with hunger, eh? Perhaps the devil will scuttle her instead of us."

"There must be some rat-hole to creep through," he continued, musing, "and if there is one, I'm the lad to nose it out. Gonzalvi, poor fellow, overcome by terror and loss of blood, has fainted, if I can judge from hard breathing; perhaps it's all as well; I can prosecute my search better without, than with him."

Nick, having delivered himself of such sentiments, set about the task he imposed upon himself in right good earnest.

Stealthily creeping and glancing in various directions, he came in a short time to one of the sides of the grotto.

Here he passed numerous recesses and crevices, none of which appeared to lead to any outlet.

At last, in one of the hollows, although it was profoundly dark, the veriest gleam forced itself upon his organs of vision.

"Ha!" said the seaman, as he recognised the welcome omen, "what does that mean? There's no smoke, they say, without fire, and, by a parity of reasoning, no light without a taper of some sort; let us steer by the beacon, at all events."

Nick had to feel his way, and nothing to guide him, but came eventually to the spot which he had noticed.

The chink, if, indeed, any at all existed, was so trifling, that its emission of light would rather confuse than confirm an observer.

The seaman gazed for a moment in doubt, and having satisfied himself that he was not mistaken in his conjecture, stepped more boldly out.

He placed his hand against the crumbling spar, and, to his delight, found a portion accede on his touch.

Further pressure caused an opening big enough

to admit a man's body, and gave him unmistakeable signs that a passage was in close proximity.

Speeding through the chasm, he in a few minutes came into light, and an enclosure of ice.

This enclosure was surrounded on every side by steep frozen rocks, too steep and slippery to climb, and appeared to leave Nick as much as ever a prisoner in their valley.

There was a small opening at the top of an eminence—which appeared to have formed at one time the only entrance to this ice-cave—but it was at such a height from him that it would have been impossible to reach it without the means of a ladder.

"What's to be done?" cried Nick, to himself. "If we remain here, we shall be starved to death, or the piratical swabs will return to murder us in cool blood; this place is evidently known to our enemies, and the crew of the El Malachor, for there are spars and ropes that belong to the vessel, and apparently deposited in this devil's hole for safety."

The seaman spoke truly; for on examining the place his quick eye had detected some ship-timber, piled up for use, and placed against one projection in it.

What was his surprise, and we may say delight, to find a coil of rope with the debris, or heap.

A means of escape at once presented itself to the fertile imagination of Brandy-nosed Nick.

"Yes," he shrieked out with joy, "by tying a piece of timber in midships I may succeed in throwing it across the gangway, and, shiver my timbers, here goes."

The seaman stopped and drew back.

"Hang me," he cried, "if I wasn't going to forget my messmate. I can't leave him in the bilboes."

Nick, quick as the thought, returned to Gonzalvi, and in a few minutes led him to the ice-cave he had discovered.

The youth, with a worn aspect, looked sadly around him, and wondered to find himself alive and fetterless.

"What place is this?" he said faintly. "We have, it is true, once more the blessing of light, but seem as great prisoners here, as ever."

"Belay—belay!" replied the seaman, "you ain't a going to sink I hope, with a cargo on board, though certainly this knocking about, and sparing of grog don't make a man stronger."

"That terrible woman, too——"

"Oh, don't mention that craft, with the devil for a figure-head," interrupted Nick, "we shall soon be out of her clutches, if we haave a head."

"My injured hand is very painful."

"My eyes! what a lubber I am," continued the previous speaker. "I forgot all about that; let's see if I can't serve as surgeon's mate."

Rough as an unlicked cub, but willing as a brother, the hardy seaman went to a spring, and essayed to wash and bind the wound Gonzalvi had received from Corah's dagger.

He smiled to find it was neither deep nor mortal.

"A day or two will soon put all things ship-shape," he muttered.

Having finished his duties with regard to the invalid, Nick next considered how he must further save him, by effecting an escape from the ice-girt dungeon.

Selecting from the pile of ship-timber a piece that had formed a bowsprit, he passed the noose-end of a rope over it.

This the seaman made fast, and succeeded, after several efforts, in flinging it into the opening above his head.

The wood, falling across this opening, allowed Nick the option of mounting to it by a hand-over-

hand movement, frequently practised by sailors in climbing the rigging of their ships, or mountaineers ascending the Hebrides or Shetland Islands.

While ascending thus, with Gonzalvi thrown across his shoulders, the noble mariner experienced a maddening feeling of excitement, such as the choicest juices of the vine would fail to give.

The world has few grander sensations than when a man is perched in mid-air, between a high-browed cliff and the sterile land.

The rope by which he is sustained seems scarce stronger than a silken thread.

The jutting prominence on which his step is steadied, affords such breadth as the kittiwake or sea gull might rest upon.

He feels—he knows all this, with the full confidence that his own agility of limb and strength of head can bring him safe off, as if he had the wing of the goss-hawk.

This, indeed, is being independent of the earth he treads on.

Many hours had elapsed since Brandy-nosed Nick had departed from home on his hunting expedition.

This was a cause of considerable suspense and anxiety to Paul Jones.

He had searched for his companion far and near, and at every point without success.

He had climbed the iceberg, crossed the frozen dell, and entered the snow-covered cave, but could find no trace of the object of his quest.

He must either have been attacked by the ravenous brutes of the region, or carried away by some heavy floe-piece of ice; so argued Paul Jones, as he returned to his solitary dwelling.

Somewhat late at night he was seated by a brisk fire in the hut; a scanty meal had been discussed, and everything prepared for sleeping.

Paul Jones ordinarily retired at an earlier hour, but he cared not, under present circumstances, to seek his couch, since he found no rest within it.

Musing for some time, he at length buried his face in his hands, as if suddenly lost in some still more gloomy thought.

After a long pause, the thinker roused himself, as if by an effort, and for a moment gazed vacantly round the apartment.

"I am alone now," he muttered; "destined to perish in the silent frost, and lay beneath the rigid sheet of snow, unknown and unlamented."

"Yet," he continued, "I will not let my spirit sink; hope shall buoy me up—relief will some day surely come."

Restlessness and impatience again assailed Paul Jones, as he paced to and fro communing with himself.

"I cannot bear this state of suspense longer," he cried, in a paroxysm of despair. "I may as well seek destruction in the all-congealing air and freezing tempest, as die by inches of famine in this poor shelter."

Here, knocking and shouts were very audible between every swell of the horrible blast which was careering without.

Paul Jones opened the door with a feeling of perplexity and fear, which was soon overcome by the appearance of Brandy-nosed nick.

"Arrived safe in port, at last, captain," said the intruder; "thought I was never coming back again, I suppose? Egad! I have had a narrow squeak of it, though."

Acknowledging Paul Jones' hearty welcome, he continued—

"You are letting the fire out, too, and my teeth

are dancing a hornpipe in my head with cold; but I'll soon put that to rights."

Nick seized the tongs, and raking together the smouldering heap, broke it up into fresh life.

Then casting his eye round, he saw in a corner a stock of driftwood, and transferred two or three logs of it at once to the blaze, which, conscious of such unwonted supply, began to transmit such a smoke as had not issued for many a day in the chamber.

While Nick was thus making himself at home and comfortable, he kept edging and jogging Paul Jones to turn to their newly arrived guest, who had silently entered the hut.

In an instant he recognised Gonzalvi.

On beholding the youth, the pirate uttered a cry of surprise, and, shaking off his excitement, rushed towards him with a quick step.

Seeing the youth was weak and faint, he led him to the nearest seat, and deposited him within it with as much tenderness and solicitude as could be shown by a nurse towards an invalid.

In good truth, the poor lad was indeed in a sorry plight.

His clothes were torn, travel-soiled, and stained with blood.

His locks were dishevelled and unkempt.

His lineaments were ghastly pale, and his right arm appeared to be wounded.

But the wound was bound up, and the limb supported by a scarf, furnished from the throat of Brandy-nosed Nick.

"My brave Gonzalvi, how I rejoice to see you again!" Paul Jones exclaimed, embracing and bending over him with an effusion of tears. "I had given you up for lost."

"You must thank Nick for bringing me to you in safety," replied the addressed, with affection: "without his aid I should never have seen Paul Jones more."

"I shall die content since I have seen him," continued Gonzalvi, resting his head upon the pirate's shoulder.

The effect produced upon Paul Jones by these words, was singular in the extreme.

He passed his hand across his brow.

He gazed on his companion in doubt and amazement.

Then, in an underbreath, murmured forth the sentence—

"I dare not think it: 'tis folly—madness!"

"Avast! belay, there!" cried Brandy-nosed Nick. "Who's talking about dying in such a delightful climate as this? It's cold, to be sure, but it braces the nerves and sharpens the appetite; in these latitudes you can take any quantity of blubber and train oil with a relish, though I must say I prefer a can of three-quarter grog of the right sort."

"Talking of drinking," continued the seaman, "our friend looks very faint, and I feel so. I think a drop of something would do us both good, especially if we have a little salt junk along with it."

"Well thought of," cried Paul Jones; "I'll get you refreshments instantly."

"Gonzalvi is suffering more from weakness and want of nourishment than from his wound," said Nick, handing a glass that had been filled by the hospitable host.

The youth took the vessel and looked fixedly at the donor as he raised it to his lips.

Paul Jones next brought forward materials for a plentiful repast—the dishes consisting of venison, dried fish, and wild fowl.

As soon as arrangements for this impromptu supper were completed, the guests sat down.

Brandy-nosed Nick was hungry, and soon cleared

his trencher, and, being by no means bashful, readily consented to its being replenished.

Gonzalvi, upon whom the generous liquor he had swallowed had produced a very beneficial effect, did also justice to the fare placed before him.

Good eating requires good drinking, says the ancient maxim.

Brandy-nosed Nick seemed thoroughly to coincide with so sensible an axiom, for with every mouthful he indulged in potations lusty, vigorous and deep.

His appetite was enormous.

His thirst prodigious.

A pause, however, in this terrible sample of mastication at length arrived, and Paul Jones ventured to ask for some particulars of the escape and recovery of their messmate, Gonzalvi.

The youth was about to answer, when he was interrupted by a sudden emotion on the part of Nick.

"Silence, for your lives!" he murmured, in a whisper. "I scent danger in the wind. Dowse the glim and shade the fire!"

"What alarm is this?" asked Paul Jones, much astonished at the unaccountable actions of the party who had spoken.

Nick, either too terrified or too absorbed in his thoughts, made no reply to the question, but started to his feet.

The noise which he had heard was now imparted to the ears of his companions.

Each one cast his looks on every side of him, bent low, and turned inquiringly to the door of the dwelling, at which there was now given three distinct taps.

CHAPTER XXVI.

WALRUS HUNTING IN THE ARCTIC SEAS.—THE PIRATES MEET WITH A STRANGE ADVENTURE.

The door was no sooner opened, than a stranger entered the hut.

He was lighted by a piece of split fir that blazed in his hand.

The torch illuminated wild and anxious features.

Their expression and appearance seemed at once to be ominous of approaching danger.

The intruder was strong and tall, and his dress bespoke his character, namely, that of chief in the Indian tribe of the White Beaver.

The impression of so singular a visitation was, as may be supposed, deep and engrossing.

Manitto was the first to break the momentary silence, which he did in somewhat ambiguous terms.

"The honour of my fathers must not be sullied. You, who boast of mildness and civilization, are prone to forgive injury."

"Your nature," continued Manitto, "teaches you calmly to bear with wrongs—nay, even sometimes to caress those who would heap them on you. The Indian knows but one alternative: revenge."

"Heaven! what suspicion crosses my mind," muttered Gonzalvi.

"I esteemed the white man," said the Indian, "and his counsels I would kindly have listened to, but he wounds my honour and betrays my faith."

"Chief, your words are enigmas," replied Paul Jones, amazed at the words he heard. "It is impossible that my companions can have—"

"My wife has received insult at their hands," interrupted Manitto. "Spirit of my fathers, I love that woman! and, to avenge her, would shed my last red drop!"

"I have watched her when the fierce blast of

winter was cutting with its chilling coldness, my hardy frame in the air.

"How have I joyed to see her calmly repose, and lightly have I placed the rein-deers skin upon her to shield her from the piercing blast.

"She is dishonoured—disgraced! she will no more draw the source of her existence from the hunting grounds of the brave and the virtuous."

As Manitto ceased speaking, several human heads could be seen above a few logs of drift wood, forming a barrier to the hut of Paul Jones.

The next moment, numerous forms appeared to float as it were to its portal.

A wild and despairing cry was uttered on every side, and with it a body of Indians presented themselves to the surprised inmates of the dwelling.

Foremost in this party, was the infamous Corah. With uplifted arms and startling eyeballs, she addressed the chief, Manitto.

"Husband," she exclaimed, "your confidence has been betrayed, and a wife demands a tribute for her fame. I need urge no words of idle encouragement."

"Speak on."

"Yonder pale-face," she added, pointing to Gonzalvi, whose terror might have been construed into guilt, "would have stained my honour. He dragged me, regardless of my cries, to his secret haunt. I swore to die ere I would yield to his desires! I struggled while strength remained, and eventually escaped."

"My eyes, what a crammer she can tell!" ejaculated Brandy-nosed Nick; "I saw the whole of the affair, from beginning to end."

"Put a clapper on your jawing tackle," whispered Paul Jones; "let me see how far this woman's effrontery will carry her."

"Is it thus the white man repays Manitto's friendship to his comrades?" exclaimed the chief, in anger.

"You shall now feel my resentment," he added, "the resentment of a confiding, and injured husband."

"If your mission regards us, as your words express, I at least must receive its import with doubt," rejoined Paul Jones. "I am convinced that the charge against Gonzalvi is groundless, and that your wife, for some evil motive, has spoken falsely."

Manitto for the moment paused, to suppress those passions which the recollection of his supposed injuries caused to burn with too bright a flame.

"The white man adds insult to injury" the chief exclaimed, breaking his previous silence. "Listen: Manitto was born a chief among the White Beaver's; he has seen the suns of fifty summers make the snows of fifty winters run off in streams; he never saw the pale-face—he was happy.

"Here are scars," he continued, "which the grey-head has taken in battle for his tribe, but he has left marks on the back of the Huron that he must hide, like a squaw, under the painted cloth he wears."

"I had thought," observed Paul Jones, "that the Indian warrior was patient, and that his spirit knew not the pain his body suffered."

"When the enemy tied Manitto to the stake," he said proudly, he laughed in their faces, and told them, women struck as hard as they. When the white men deal him a blow more deadly than the Hurons, he tells them he never forgives an injury."

"You have heard only—"

"I will hear no more!" exclaimed Manitto, interrupting Paul Jones, and bending his fierce looks on the countenance of Gonzalvi, who shrank within himself in dread.

"Drag the perfidious youth to the precipice beyond the cave; from the highest pinnacle let his body be

hurled, and his carcass left a prey to the wild vulture and red-fox!"

Fear which had choked the utterance of Gonzalvi, at length gave way to a despairing shriek, as he heard the terrible doom pronounced.

"Oh, let me speak!" he exclaimed, frantically. "On my soul, I am innocent."

"Husband, hear not a word, he would mislead you; if you deem Corah guilty, he bares her bosom to your dagger—she closes not her eyes till she sees her honour indicated."

"Enough! my indignant soul reads truth in thy action," said Manitto, embracing Corah, who had abjectly cast herself into his arms. "Lead the vile culprit to his punishment. I from the icy mount will give the signal for his death."

The Indians darted upon Gonzalvi, like kites upon a fleshy morsel.

Gonzalvi threw himself down on his knees to sue for grace.

He strove to move compassion by a flood of tears.

"Mercy—mercy!" he cried, in a piteous tone, but he found none at the hands of his pitiless persecutors."

He was removed from the hut, in a fainting state, and attended by a guard bearing torches to the place destined to be that of his execution.

Paul Jones had not been a silent observer of these atrocious proceedings; finding his entreaties on behalf of the victim of the malicious Corah unavailing, he with Brandy-nosed Nick, rushed from the spot to carry out a project that would inflict a summary vengeance on those who were about to take the life of their unfortunate comrade.

The flesh of the walrus, or sea-horse, valued by the inhabitants of the Arctic Regions, did not seem to have come amiss to our Northern voyagers.

The crew of the El Malachor now rejoiced at finding a substitute for their daily diminishing salt pork, hile walrus hunting, and excitement of the chase relieved, in a great measure, the monotony attending a life in the snowy wilderness to which they had strayed.

It was late in the day when a party, enjoying the sport to which we have alluded, came upon the walrus basking upon the ice.

The pirates were in a boat, and had observed the animal at a distance.

"There's one, by my ancestors bone's!" said Black Bill, who was the first to perceive the walrus. "I can make out the tawny jacket, brown as Scotch snuff, as clear as the mast-head on a sunshiny day in the tropics."

"He wriggles more like a sea-bear," replied De'il Rob, gazing at the point Black Bill had indicated.

"No, that's a morse," continued Black Bill, "see his hind flippers are connected together by loose skin, which give him the facilities of swimming out of our reach, unless we catch him napping."

The walrus had recognised her enemies.

Displeased she roared.

The sound resembled that of a roused lion.

"I'd sooner be keel-haul'd, than hear that song over again," said another pirate, Hal Harpoon, "and confound her lantern jaws, you can squeeze nothing else out of them."

"Ay, ay," returned Black Bill, "we must look sharp after the crittur, or she will run before the wind, and give us the slip."

"So much the better," answered Hal Harpoon. "I don't like to tackle 'em, when their cubs are alongside, and the snout of the young un was just peeping out of water as you spoke."

"Why, Hal Harpoon," cried Black Bill, "you ain't a going to say as how you're frightened."

"Not exactly," answered the addressed; "only I fancy we shall make a bad voyage of it—if—"

"Belay, belay!" interrupted Black Bill, "don't be a milksop; there ain't no danger."

"Perhaps not; only somehow or other I think we'd had better leave this job alone."

"I've been your messmate," continued Black Bill, "for many a year, and I love you; but lash me to the gratings if you haven't as many humours as a monkey."

"If you say so," cried Hal Harpoon sulkily, stand by sheets and stays, and get under way.

"I shan't desert the ship, come what may," he added, "and if I play a trick, scuttle my sconce, as if it were an old calabash."

With these words, the boat broke the ice, entered a narrow channel, and the pirates came up with the walrus, who seemed quite prepared to receive them.

She appeared, as Hal Harpoon had observed, a solitary female, but with such fury in her eye, that those who meditated an attack found it also necessary to anticipate a defence.

Resorting to various stratagems, the pirates, after a time, succeeded in harpooning the animal.

She died with a shriek that disconcerted for a moment even those stern hearts that had slain her.

Shortly after the smoke of the harpoon gun had cleared away, a sound resembling the grunt of a pig and bark of a dog was heard.

It proceeded from a baby walrus, who suddenly made its appearance.

The animal that was killed had been fastened to the stern of the boat, to tow her to the ship.

It was now found that the cub was clinging to her, and that the poor thing was clinging to its dead mother.

On the discovery, the pirates hauled the dead mother on board, leaving the cub to float alongside.

Black Bill managed, after a few minutes, to catch him round the neck with the bight of a rope.

"What are you going to do with that warmint?" asked De'il Rob, as Black Bill drew the young walrus out of the water.

"Keep him as a curiosity," the latter replied. "You don't often take the likes of this: they skip out of danger quicker than an any christian animal I knows on."

"Hadn't you better kill him?" suggested Hal Harpoon. "They say the morse is very sensible, and has been known before now to take revenge on the boats sent against him."

"Tell that to the marines, the sailors won't believe it," said Black Bill. "Why, hang me if the little critter ain't got tears in his eyes! weeping for his mammy, no doubt; there's little danger in a craft whose ballast is made up of love and affection."

"Go to leeward if you will," replied Hal Harpoon, "only remember I've warned you."

The pet, for so we must call the captured walrus, appeared to have only recently been born, and it was owing to such a cause that it had been left by the herd with the mother."

Destitute of food, instinct next taught the offspring to draw itself to the teats on the hide of the defunct parent.

For some time it lay on the maternal remains, but, as if conscious of sorrow, refused to suck.

The forlorn beast next snuffed about as if wondering where he was.

His observers watched in silence his actions.

He came up further and further into the boat,

and, finding the road clear, wandered about it to and fro.

The first thing he did was to sniff at the petticoat trousers the seamen wore; he had probably never seen such garments before.

He next examined the features of the crew with the same sort of curiosity with which they were examining their strange companion.

Suddenly, and unexpectedly, he made direct for the open stream.

Pulling himself up to the edge of the boat, first with his chin, then with his flippers.

He ducked his head under water with such eagerness that a two months' absence from a bath would be likely to produce in an individual attached to frequent ablution.

After a long dive, up came the intelligent head of the little walrus to the surface once more, and he gave a hurried glance around.

Before the spectators could recover their surprise, he had cut his way through the ice by main sheer force.

Five times did the animal charge against the barriers, and five times succeed in crashing a passage through them.

At last he plunged under the edge of a floe, and did not reappear.

"I won't lose the young lubber," cried Black Bill. "Follow, my hearties; he's too exhausted to rise, so we must give him assistance."

With the words the pirate jumped out of the boat, his example being followed by the rest of his comrades.

They succeeded in coming up with the walrus, and getting him out of the water.

He appeared weak, and suffering from the effects of his lengthened immersion.

After awhile he stole up to the men, and wiped his nose on the legs of their trousers.

They supplied him with a swab.

The animal seemed quite to understand the use for which it was intended.

He knew the voice of his friend, Black Bill, slightly raised his head, and gave a low grunt of recognition.

It was now that the pirates were apprised of a new danger that presented itself to them.

In following up their chase, they had followed too far on drifting ice.

The blocks threatening to impound them, either in a fearful prison, or urge them to the rapids which descended over the steep precipices adjacent.

A perilous passage over the ice at length brought the adventurous party to the spot where they had left their boat.

To their dismay and horror it was gone.

Black Bill was the first to exercise the power of speech, of which the alarming casualty had deprived each spectator.

"It's no use hauling down the colours, messmate," he exclaimed, "I shall nail them to the mast, and fight while there's breath in my body."

"We shall perish," he continued, "if all hands are piped to confidence; some of the crew are prowling about these quarters like ourselves, and will answer the signal of danger when they see it."

With the words, the buccaneer lost no time in striking a light by the assistance of one of his pistols.

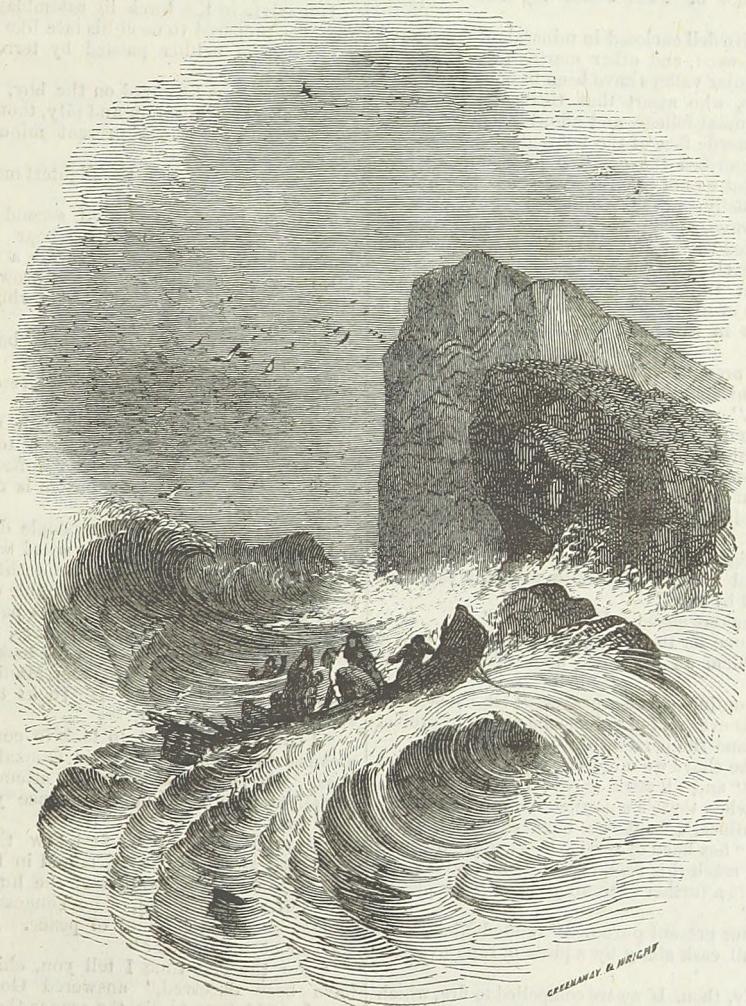
Some dry dulce supplied him with fuel.

These means enabled him to raise the required beacon.

To the delight of one and all, in a few moments it was answered by a second, that shot forth from the opposite shore.

The water thus illuminated, revealed the boat that had so mysteriously disappeared.

THE FROZEN CRAWL OF THE ICE-BOUND SHIP



THE PIRATES CARRY OFF EMONA.—*Vide Chapter XXVI.*

It had not drifted as had been supposed from its moorings, for two individuals were seen using the oars vigorously.

In the uncertain light, it was impossible to make out the strangers, who had so unceremoniously dispossessed the pirates of their little vessel.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE SEA-WEED HOLLOW.

We will follow Paul Jones and Brandy-nosed Nick in the boat they had taken from the Pirates.



Having crossed the lake, they mounted the steep leesberg, from which Manitto had ordered Gonzalvi to be purled.

The fugitives look round them in vain for the approach of the executioners, and came to a halt.

The position they had attained was a most commanding one.

One, in truth, of the most picturesque that could be conceived in arctic latitudes.

Scattered pyramids, creeping glaciers, and towers of ice, spread themselves on every side for miles, and were lost only in an expanse too vast to be observed by human vision.

These again, brightened by the Aurora-gleam flashing prismatic glances, presented a scene more astounding than those pictured in the stories of wild romance.

At the foot of Paul Jones lay the Sea-weed Hollow.

An extensive dell enclosed in mineral rocks, covered by dulse, sea-weed, and other marine vegetation.

These singular valleys have been frequently noticed by travellers, who assert that their appearance resembles autumnal foliage, and afford a striking contrast to the sterile face of the icy regions.

Having described the position in which we find Paul Jones, let us not lose sight of the object he has in view, the deliverance of Gonzalvi.

"It is strange," said he, "that the Indians, who appear so friendly in general to the white-men, can behave so treacherously to us."

"I suspect that the devil's bird Rotaldo, has been at some of his tricks," replied Nick. "Depend upon it he's in the neighbourhood, hatching mischief."

"Yes, the presence of the crew we encountered on our journey hither, would lead me to think with you on this point."

"Ah, the rascals," said Nick, "I think we paid off an instalment of the debt we owe them for their scurvy treatment. I wonder how they got on without their boat; the lubbers, I wouldn't throw out a rope to them if they'd gone twice down in the sea of despair."

"Their signal for assistance was answered," rejoined Paul Jones; "therefore probably they are safely landed by this."

"More breakers ahead. Eh, captain?"

"Let us hope for the best," returned Paul Jones, there is seldom an arduous undertaking without danger.

"But," continued the speaker, "let us bear in mind there is ever a kind providence above to protect the helpless and the persevering."

"That's the chart we must steer by," said Brandy-nosed Nick, "and I'll stick to you like a shark does to a vessel, when there's a pestilence on board her."

"The mutineer's boat we have captured," said Paul Jones, "has been of service to us, since we have been able to reach this spot before them, and may be useful to us in a further extremity. You have plenty of powder?"

"A little for present purposes," replied Nick, indicating a small cask slung by a piece of rope over his back.

"Be steady, then. If we are compelled to fire, which heaven avert, do not level at the red-men, but fire, over their heads. I seek rather to intimidate, than injure them."

The glare of pine torches was now cast upon the distant entrance of the sombre valley, to which Paul Jones, the next moment descended by the pathway immediately before him.

"The White Beavers are approaching with their prisoner," he said, "we must also advance, but remain concealed, till we gain yon promontory."

"There," he added, "we shall have a commanding view, and vantage ground."

The route of Paul Jones lay along the bed of a water course.

Though protected from any great danger of observation, by the precipitous banks and the thick shrubbery of sea-weed that skirted the stream for the whole distance, he neglected no precaution known to an Indian attack.

Paul Jones crawled rather than walked, so as to catch occasional glimpses of the progress of the hostile party.

Arrived at the destination he had spoken of, he halted and listened.

The men, whose approaching footsteps, had caught his ear, the next minute came openly into view.

They were, as had been supposed, the Indians and their captive.

Gonzalvi, in the torch lit assemblage, stood erect and firm, prepared to meet his fate like a hero.

He seemed neither palsied by terror, or stricken with shame.

Paul Jones, as he gazed on the boy, felt a powerful impulse of admiration and pity, though no opportunity could offer at the present minute, to exhibit his generous emotions.

He watched, however, the slightest movement with eager eyes.

While he persuaded himself, seconded by a noble resolution, that he would yet bear his youthful comrade harmless though so severe a trial.

Insensibly the pirate chief drew nearer the swarthy lines of the savage tribe, who had formed a circle around Gonzalvi.

He scarcely breathed, so intense became his interest in the spectacle.

The chief, Manitto, was now addressing the condemned victim.

"From yonder icy eminence you must expiate your crime," he exclaimed, pointing to the precipice of death. "The White Beaver suffers not insult. His wife, the partner of his bosom is dearer to him than life.

"Were she debased, her people disgraced, her name and reputation blotted, what would become of Manitto? His bow would be nothing, his lance pointless, and his firm sinews tremble with fear."

The chief hesitated, then after a pause resumed:

As he trod the wide frozen waters, his head that is erect would droop; he dare not look his kinsman in the face. A great chief like Manitto has more thoughts than tongues. He looks to see that no enemies are on his trail.

"I counsel you, chief, to look to consequences of a cause so infamous," replied Gonzalvi with firmness. "It is useless for me to attempt to defend myself, or palliate my conduct, since you refuse to hear me."

"Our hearts, when we first saw the pale-face," continued Mannito, "were bound in friendship towards him—the wigwam and the hunting-ground were left at his disposal. The Yengese and the red-man smoked the calumet of peace. How has the warrior been requited?"

"For the last time I tell you, chief, your ears have been deceived," answered Gonzalvi, impatiently, "If I am to die, the sooner the better, since all I love is lost to me—lead me to the rock of death. I shall take my leap fearlessly, though it be sounded with a line of a hundred fathoms."

"Who dares say Manitto is deceived?" exclaimed Corah, advancing from the circle, and embracing her husband.

"Liar—trader—ingrate! he would have been deceived but for my firmness."

"He would have been deceived," she continued,

"but there are good spirits who protect the virtuous."

"There's no good comes of a woman, if she once takes to spirits," whispered Brandy-nosed Nick, who had now sidled up to Paul Jones, in his retreat.

Gonzalvi regarded Corah for a moment, and turned pale at her bold and unconscionable language.

"Infamous woman," the youth proceeded, in a voice trembling wildly with vehemence, "your voice joins that of some demons, while the elements whisper to me this is some delusion."

"Your power," he continued, "rests but in the idle belief of the ignorant, and false, scandalously false, as your accusations is there are thoughts in this wild brain of mine, that I shall yet live to deprive you of your unenvied exaltation."

"No more delay," cried Corah, pointing to Gonzalvi as she spoke. "Prepare to lead the culprit hence. My injuries demand the instant sacrifice of them."

"Hold!" cried a voice, as the Indians were about to obey the mandate of their queen.

It was that of Paul Jones.

The next moment he presented himself to their astonished gaze.

"Spare him—spare him!" continued the Pirate, in a voice of supplication. "I entreat you release your prisoner, and listen to me."

"It cannot be," returned Manitto, as he commanded his followers to sheath the knives they had drawn on the intruder. "I have been dishonoured in the person of this youth. I have no alternative or middle station; his post must be high on yon lofty headland; he must sleep at its base, with the white billows of the ocean booming over his senseless corpse."

"You have the evidence only of the bare word of a woman," said Paul Jones; "I have further proof of the boy's innocence."

Behold!" the speaker continued, drawing Brandy-nosed Nick to his side, "here is one who can be a witness."

"The blow must be struck at once, or I shall be betrayed," muttered Corah, to herself.

"Warriors," she cried, aloud, to the Indians, "prepare to strike—your queen commands that the pale-face dies!"

"Inexorable woman," returned Gonzalvi, "I have maintained silence to save you, but you will blindly rush on your own destruction."

"What means the Idiot?"

"This: that I can produce a proof of my innocence, which neither your husband or your tribe dare dispute."

"Let it appear," said Manitto, startled at so positive an assertion.

"It is impossible, chief," continued the speaker, "that I can have dishonoured you or yours, since I am—"

"What?" interrupted Manitto.

"A woman! Woman's wit, they say, exceeds man's judgment. It may excel the artifices of her own sex, if we may judge from my triumph over her who would have triumphed over me."

Manitto made no reply, but fixed his glance on the livid features of his queen.

"A woman!" ejaculated Paul Jones, in a voice that bespoke anything but composure.

"Yes, a woman," echoed the other; "Gonzalvi and Emona are one and the same person. Has the likeness never struck you?"

"My wife!"

"Yes, Paul Jones, I am thy wife," replied Emona; "an ardent affection will excuse the imprudent step I have taken."

"Your life," she continued, "I learnt by chance, was one of peril, and though you had concealed the truth from me, I determined to share peril with you."

"Affection cannot be sufficiently valued," said Paul Jones, "that could urge you to endure the hardships undergone. I can never repay this intangible proof of love and constancy."

Regarding Paul Jones, who clasped her firmly to his bosom, Emona continued—

"Thus have I argued, husband; vice and error were fastening on your soul, with the gripe of a hideous constrictor, and dragging you away towards perdition; still if one woman truly love, you are not wholly lost."

The bright flashes, and the quick reports of some dozen muskets, now passed through the defile.

The Indians sent back the intimidating yell of triumph, as they witnessed the fall of several of the tribe.

Not one of the party could account for this hostile proceeding.

Each, mute with surprise, grasped in an instant his formidable weapon.

After allowing a moment of awful stillness to enforce his discipline, the well known voice of Rotaldo was heard, in low murmuring syllables gradually steal upon the ear.

"We are lost," exclaimed Emona, "throwing herself into the expanded arms of her husband.

"Not yet—not yet!" replied the agitated but undaunted Paul Jones, "we are not yet discovered and there is still hope."

Faint, and almost despairing, as was the prospect of escape, the words last uttered were not thrown away upon Emona, for it awakened her powers to such a manner that she waited the result in silence.

"Can't we reach the boat?" whispered Brandy-nosed Nick, "and sheer off, before the piratical swabs are aware of our being amongst these infernal niggers."

"We must try for it at all hazards," replied Paul Jones, suddenly impressed with the importance of the seaman's shrewd remark and forethought.

The Indians, overcoming the momentary discomfiture, silently repaired to their appointed stations.

These were in fissures of the ice blocks and other openings. In both of which they could command the approaches or passes to the regions.

The farther end being unguarded, gave an opportunity to Paul Jones and his companions to retire thither without molestation of any kind.

They arrived safely at a spot where some stunted marine shrubs had found root.

This forming a sort of thicket, seemed a likely place to afford concealment, for a time, at least.

Paul Jones, with the swiftness of a deer, darted into the refuge.

He was followed quickly by Emona, and Brandy-nosed Nick.

Here the fugitives secured themselves, as well as circumstances would permit, among the fragments of ice-rocks, and the pendent vegetation.

A long and anxious watch succeeded, without any further evidences of pursuit on the part of the pirates.

The distant and random guns told they were still in conflict with the Indians.

"I begin to hope," said Paul Jones, after a pause, "we are out of danger, and that we may venture to make for our boat."

"Yes, the coast seems clear," observed Nick, "but like a wreck on a lee shore, I don't see where we are bound to."

"To our hut, of course," replied Paul Jones; "tis the only asylum in this desolate land."

The suggestion was met by Nick with an incredulous shake of the head, as he answered—

"It won't be safe, at present, to steer in that latitude. I suspect the mutinous swabs have got an inkling of our whereabouts, and will surround the crib for a day or two, expecting our return."

"Right, Nick, I did not think of that."

"Why go at all to a spot where our enemies are sure to find us?" said Emona, whose terror until now had kept her silent. "Better to trust to the open ice-field and heaven for succour, than our fortunes in their keeping."

"Our case cannot be so hopeless," exclaimed Paul Jones; "something whispers to me even at this very moment succour is at hand."

"To be sure it is," returned Nick, endeavouring to cheer the drooping spirits of Emona. "We shan't be long before the boatswain pipes to dinner, depend upon it. Many a losing voyage have I made in my time, but I never let my heart sink five fathom; 'cos why, I knew there was, as the song says—

A sweet little cherub sits perched up aloft,
To look out for the life of poor Jack."

Take my word for it," continued the seaman, "we shan't be left on this shoal at the mercy of wind and weather."

Paul Jones and his companions now advanced from their cover, intending to make way for their boat.

They had not proceeded many paces, when a burst of cries arrested their progress.

The next moment, four pirates appeared in the pathway.

Paul Jones felt a burning desire to rush forward and meet them.

He was restrained by Brandy-nosed Nick.

The fugitives drew back into their retreat, as the enemy advanced.

"Lie still till they come up," said the seaman.

"The leading man comes to his death," he added, examining his flint, "though it should be the Spaniard, Rotaldo, himself."

The pirates, discovering the retreat, followed in pursuit, with curses and imprecations.

When they were within a yard of it, the pistols of Nick rose and poured out their fatal contents.

Two of the foremost adversaries bounded like stricken deer, and fell headlong over the broken fragments of the ice.

"Now, captain," exclaimed Nick, drawing his knife, while his quick eyes began to flash with ardour, "you can leave those screeching imps behind, of the other we are sartain."

He was obeyed, as but two pirates were to be overcome.

Paul Jones gave one of his pistols to Nick, and together they dashed towards the foe.

They discharged their weapons at the same instant, and equally, without success.

Paul Jones encountered a man of gigantic stature, and of the fiercest mien in the crew of the El Malachor.

At the same moment, Nick found himself engaged with another, in a similar contest of hand to hand.

With ready skill, the seaman grasped the arm of his antagonist, as each upheld the dangerous knife.

His toughened sinews prevailed after a time over the less practised limb opposed to him.

Suddenly, wrenching his armed hand from a grasp that held it, Nick drove his sharp blade into the heart of the pirate, at the moment he had been deprived of his own weapon.

A shriek from Emona now alarmed Nick.

Turning, the seamen discovered the unfortunate woman, vainly contending with the two ruffians who had been maimed in the first onset, but who had been but partially wounded.

Nick was by Emona's side with the quickness of the eagle's swoop.

A brace of pistols were pointed at his breast, and the pirates fired.

He saw the death-dealing tribes levelled, and stooped to the ground.

The bullets whizzed through the air over his head.

"Whew! I'm not to be run down by a fleet of small craft! Hark'ee, two to one are long odds, but, damme, I'll scuttle your nobs before I strike."

With the words, Nick fetched a compass with his weapon, that dazzled the eyes of the beholders like a flash of lightning.

Two fearful groans that followed the gladiatorial display, announced that the opposing pirates had bit the dust.

While the above occurrences were taking place, Paul Jones had been pressed in even a more deadly struggle.

His blade had been snapped in the first attack.

As he was destitute of any other means of defence, his safety entirely depended on bodily strength, and resolution.

Though deficient in neither of these qualities, he had met a foe every way his equal.

Happily, he succeeded in disarming him.

The encounter was fierce, savage, and fearfully desperate.

The antagonists had reached the dizzy height of a neighbouring iceburg.

Every step brought them nearer to the verge of the chasm beneath.

Paul Jones perceived that here the final and conquering effort must be made.

Each of the combatants threw all his energies into that effort.

The result was that each tottered on the very brink of the glassy precipice.

Paul Jones felt the grasp of his enemy on his throat.

A savage smile gleamed upon his countenance at the revengeful hope that the fate of both would be the same.

The one felt his body yielding to a resistless power.

The other the passing agony of such a fearful moment.

The over-strained eye of Paul Jones gazed, while in this extreme danger, at a dark hand that passed before it.

A glancing knife appeared glistening in the dreamy air, and the enemy released his hold, as blood flowed freely from around the severed tendons of his wrist.

The rescued man saw no more.

He felt himself drawn backward by a saving arm, and fainted.

On returning consciousness, Paul Jones discovered the man with whom he had struggled laying in gore at the bottom of the precipice.

At his side, the form of his preserver, Fergus Blake.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE TORCH.—THE SIGNAL GUN.—THE CONFLICT ON THE ICE.

"Is it to one who I can look upon only as an enemy that I owe my life?" asked Paul Jones, as he regarded Fergus Blake.

"Appearances are against me, I confess, he replied, "but if you knew me truly, I doubt if your eyes would flash with their present enmity."

"Are you not one of the cowardly crew that consigned me to a doom worse than death?"

"Captain, in that crew, there were men who approved the sentence passed upon you."

"Men," continued Fergus Blake, "who felt they had justice on their side, and that however repugnant it might be to the feelings of nature, the execution was required by exalted principle."

"You were of that number?"

"Yes, and now grieve for my error."

Paul Jones scrutinised the pirate without speaking.

"Rotaldo poisoned the minds of them, by false accusations," said Fergus Blake, "as many since have discovered, and, like myself, watch but the opportunity to wreak revenge."

A quiet smile lighted the haughty features of Paul Jones, as he replied—

"I cannot permit Fergus Blake to accuse me of want of judgement; he has saved my life, in the coolest and readiest manner, and he has made a friend who will never require to be reminded of the debt he will yet repay."

Fergus Blake offered his hand to the warm grasp, of Paul Jones.

"Life is an obligation, which man owes to his fellow, in adversity," the former exclaimed, "and I dare say that he whom I have served in the present extremity, would have done a similar turn for myself."

"Ay, that he would," was the quick answer of Paul Jones, turning to address Nick and Emona, who came up at the moment.

"We have found a friend, when least expected," he said.

"Why," replied Nick, "it's Fergus Blake, one of the rascally lubbers who—"

Stopping short he whispered—"Had we not better sink such a cruiser, before he sails into the haven of mischief?"

"No, he is well-disposed towards us," replied Paul Jones; "he is to be trusted."

"Trust nobody," said Brandy-nosed Nick. "I don't, since they forgot to wipe out my score at the Lord High Admiral at wapping."

"Has he not saved my life?" replied the pirate.

"Lor! what a head I've got. I quite forgot all about that. Tip us your fin, old chap starboard of course; you came to the captain's assistance when he was within an oar's length of death, and I respect you for the act, though you be a damn lubberly, piratical swab, and a devilish good sort or fellow."

While Nick spoke these words, he shook hands with Fergus, who seemed greatly pleased with the alliance, till the hearty and lengthened grip he received changed his countenance.

His grimace fully evinced the seaman's strength.

"How did you discover us?" said Paul Jones, addressing Fergus Blake."

"Hunting the seal," he answered, "I came upon your boat, while chance and curiosity led me to your rescue."

"Your rigging has seen some service!" observed Nick, eyeing the newly-found friend.

"Mayhap, you take me for a buccaneer; no such thing," replied Fergus Blake. "I've deserted from the El Malachor, and am an enemy to all mutineers and—"

"Loblolly boys in the piccarooning line," said Nick, completing the speaker's sentence.

"We are fellow sufferers," exclaimed Paul Jones, "and should assist each other."

"Where can we seek safety?" said Emona, ad-

vancing; "our temporary shelter is taken possession of by our merciless enemies, and we cannot linger here without discovery."

"We must take at once to our boat," she continued, "and look forward with humble confidence to a goal which providence supplies."

The hard, weather-beaten features of Brandy-nosed Nick, began sensibly to work, as he exclaimed—

"There's reason in her words, and we must not plead ignorance of our danger."

"Listen to my purpose," said Fergus Blake. "It is plain that henceforth we must sail in the same latitudes."

"Heave away," rejoined Nick. "You have been a friend to us, and hang me if I don't stick by you as long as I can carry a bag of canvass."

"My first object, of course, must be to insure the safety of all," continued Fergus, "and then provide you with a refuge."

"What with ship and cargo," ejaculated the seaman! "Huzza, we shant drive, then as we expected, under bare poles, without a mess of provisions aboard."

"Smite my timbers," he continued, rubbing his hands with joy, "it's quite a pleasure to get into trouble and out of it again in such an agreeable manner."

"I must first acquaint you," said Fergus Blake, "that I intend to take you to my rendezvous beneath the loadstone rock. I have remained there, as you may judge for some time in security. You will find in this place, friends as stanch as I am myself."

"Are they of the ship's company?" asked Paul Jones.

"No," replied the other, "my companions are females."

"Sly dog," muttered Nick, "how the deuce did you get petticoats into the rigging?"

"They are Indians," said Fergus. "One of their number, Sumach, is my bride, and, returning an affection I had conceived for her, has afforded me the same asylum I offer to you."

"Will not her tribe seek us out, and for vengeance, deliver us over to the mercy of our enemies?" asked Emona, with distrust.

"She is deemed lost to them," returned Fergus; "besides, what is right and proper in a red-skin, is indeed sinful in a white."

"This is not a time for idle subtleties or false opinions," said Paul Jones, "but a moment when every duty should be equally considered."

"I consider only of your life," answered Emona, clinging to his arm with the dependency of an infant; "the worst to us can be but death—a tribute that all must pay at the good time of heaven's appointment."

"There are evils worse than death," exclaimed Paul Jones, speaking hoarsely, and as if fretful at Emona's importunity; "but which the presence of him who has already shown himself a friend, may avert."

"Fergus Blake," he continued, "I shall trust to your sole guidance; it is the only means I possess at present of returning an obligation."

The addressed smiled an acknowledgement of such confidence.

The next moment he glided up the acclivity he had descended, and sought with his companions the shelter of the icy rocks and herbage.

After a short but toilsome journey, they reached the boat they had left upon the frozen beach; beside it was the canoe in which their deliverer had come so opportunely to their rescue.

These little vessels were at once cast off, and put to sea.

The larger of the two, was occupied by Paul Jones,

Emona, and Brandy-nosed Nick; the smaller served to carry Fergus Blake.

Thus did the adventurers breast once more the open ocean, and brave the terrors of its floating ice.

It was dreary, piercing cold, and so dark that an object could not be seen, beyond a boat's length.

But Fergus Blake, who knew the water well, was at once both a consoler and a pilot.

He continued his course carefully, watching and avoiding the floes and frozen masses, which every minute passed by or dashed against each other with fearful violence.

The snow fell thickly.

The wind howled furiously.

But stoutly sped the voyagers in the wintery tempest.

The wished for haven is nearly reached.

"What was that?"

"Hark!"

"A gun."

"Another, and another, nearer and nearer."

The given signal tells too fatally, that other vessels are close at hand.

There is a pause of appalling suspense.

The sound of oars is next plainly distinguishable.

The ears of the mariners are directed to catch, if possible, the voices.

"Yes," thought Fergus Blake, "you come with the intentions of taking Paul Jones, but you will through me be disappointed."

As the boats approached, he heard the well known voice of De'il Rob.

The signal told the fugitives they were discovered.

In all probability they would meet with resistance, and, therefore, had prepared for such a result.

Silence being now no longer of any advantage, the ringleader cried out—

"Torches, my lads, lets have light."

By the lurid glare of the ignited brands, all eyes were strained to catch a glimpse of the pirates.

But they could only discern a black, shapeless mass, floating on the water at a little distance.

To their bewildered fancy, it seemed absolutely standing still.

They were soon made aware of their error, and that the chase was moving quickly.

From the increased rapidity with which the oars were urged, it was evident that the buccaneers had discovered the right track.

Paul Jones and his companions watched the manœuvres of the other boats, and forced every sinew to keep ahead of them.

What terror is inspired in their breast, as the keel of the barges cleave like lightning the frozen deep.

The darkling current hurries by.

The rocks and ice banks, of all forms and sizes, hover around, or make their way in ghost-like silence. Their solemn shadows seem to reflect more hidden dangers.

The deep gloom, the glimmering lights and echoing threats of the pirates, picture a scene awfully, awful, and yet sublime.

The canoe of Fergus Blake led the way.

Paul Jones and the others followed in the wake.

The boats of the pursuers and pursued flew before the wind.

They had now no guide but the breaking water on each side of them.

"Ned Hawser," cried De'il Rob, "you know this track better than us, you must be made pilot."

"Ay, ay, to be sure, take the helm," exclaimed the crew, severally.

"You all know me, lads—I shall not desert you!" Hawser replied, "and since De'il Rob supposes I

can steer you better than he, I suppose I must consent to his proposal."

The pilot took his seat as the boat neared the frozen mass.

"Starboard a little!—starboard yet! Steady, so! There's the creek," cried Ned Hawser, pointing to some clear water between the ridges. "Port a little, and we shall be upon the runaways in a jiffey; I see they have taken a dangerous channel!"

The assertion was correct.

Fergus Blake had resolved to force their way among the ice.

They were now running a passage through it.

The slight vessels struck heavily again and again.

On the last stroke the boat of Paul Jones came broadside to the wind, and keeled over.

A jagged point of ice found its way through her timbers.

The next moment the planking gave way, and the water poured in with resistless rapidity.

There was a dead silence, and the spectators stood agast.

"It is my fault," said Fergus Blake, after a pause.

Despair and agony were depicted terribly in his countenance.

"It is of little consequence whose fault it was," said Paul Jones, gloomily. "Fate has decreed that we shall perish.

"But we have too much upon our hands even to think of death," he continued; "the enemy is upon us, and we will fall amply avenged!"

As soon as these words were spoken, the determined men provided themselves with arms.

They surrounded, as if to protect Emona, and gave every evidence that each meant to struggle to the last.

The pirates had now advanced in strong force.

It was discovered that they were concentrating at one point.

Paul Jones and his companions retired farther on the floating iceberg, whose undulations formed a barricade.

He gave orders that as soon as they had fired they should retreat, and re-load under the protection offered them.

By such tactics he hoped yet to drive off the enemy.

The word was given for a volley.

It was answered by another, and a shout by the pirates, who pressed on till they received a second discharge.

They now made other arrangements, and spread themselves in a semi-circle in front of the opposing party.

A continued and galling fire was now commenced, and kept up for several minutes.

This was returned with equal vigour by the besieged, who, calling into action all their arms, led the enemy to suppose that they were more formidable than they had anticipated.

It was darker than ever, the torches being put out, and not a figure was to be distinguished, except by the momentary flashing of the fire-arms.

Their forked tongues licked the air, they vanished into vapour.

Suddenly there was a crash, and a stifled cry.

"What was that?" asked Fergus Blake, with a grave face.

Paul Jones, returned no answer, but remained listening with an earnest ear for comparative silence reigned after the occurrence.

"They are trying something," said Fergus Blake, after a lengthened pause.

"They will try a long while before they subdue us."

"The intricacies of this ice-block," continued Paul Jones, "has put us on a footing with the foe, and we are in every way his equal."

"Could we contrive to get hold of their boats, we might push off before the rascals are aware of it."

"A good thought. I will go up and see how things are."

"But you may expose yourself to their fury."

"It will matter little," said Paul Jones, "the hour glass, I fear, is turned for me in this bout—my sand is running fast; let them fire, the deep sea or the blue sky, rather than a rope and a yard-arm."

The speaker issued from his ambush.

He could distinguish nothing.

An occasional bullet whistled past him.

He proceeded to the ridges of ice, and sheltered himself behind them.

What were the intentions of the pirates it was difficult for Paul Jones to ascertain, as the firing had now altogether ceased.

No further attempts were made to advance, and he in vain puzzled himself as to the continued inaction of his enemies.

Some minutes of suspense passed away, when the fearful truth was made manifest.

It was during the late encounter, that Black Bill, who commanded one of the boats, made up his mind how to act with regard to the beleaguered foe.

He suddenly conceived a plan, and as suddenly adopted it.

"This desultory warfare," he argued, "must end in the decimation of the crew, and the probable escape of those we were fighting against; already nine of our number are wounded, and two left dead on the ice."

Darkness veils the scene.

"Let see if we can't get round to the rear of you," continued the seaman, holding up his clenched hand, and shaking it in supposition at Paul Jones."

He had shrewdly compelled the latter to scatter his forces, as the pirates had scattered theirs, and he determined to make an attack at the weakest point.

The position of Emona during the conflict seemed to offer the least resistance, and Black Bill, muffling his oars, under cover made for the spot.

He and his boatmen effected a landing in secrecy and silence.

Emona saw the form of a man advancing towards her.

He gave a signal of recognition.

She immediately turned, and finding Nick had removed from his position, hastened to meet the figure observed.

Instead of receiving Nick, one of the pirates was encountered.

Emona was seized before she discovered her mistake.

Even to a sailor, in the the prevailing darkness there had been no perceptible difference between friends and enemies.

"Holy virgin! who and what are you?" cried Emona, struggling to disengage herself.

"One who is very fond of a pretty girl," replied the pirate, still detaining her."

"Unhand me, wretch! Are you aware whom you are addressing?"

"Not I, nor do I care," replied Black Bill.

"You will, perhaps, ruffian, when you learn I am the wife of Paul Jones," exclaimed Emona, pushing him away.

"You are right, then, I do care; for where his wife goes, Paul Jones will follow."

"Come, my lads, a little help here," continued Black Bill, "she is as strong as a mule; force her into the boat, we have a prize worth taking."

Emona screamed, but she was gagged in a moment with a handkerchief.

The scream attracted the attention of Paul Jones and Fergus Blake.

Both rushed to the spot from whence it proceeded.

To their dismay, they beheld the figures of the pirates, one whom now bore a torch.

Before they could rescue Emona, the whole party had gained their boat, and put off from the ice.

"Oh, heaven!" gasped Fergus Blake, she is lost."

Paul Jones attempted to reply.

He could utter only an inarticulate exclamation.

The next moment his strength failed him, and he sank, overcome with emotion and terror.

"For mercy sake," said Fergus Blake, "throw off this ecstasy of grief! We have need of our reason—let us think how this disaster may be averted."

These words roused the dreamer from the stupor of despair which had for the moment paralysed his faculties, and suddenly he exclaimed—

"Our boat is destroyed, but the canoe still remains. Let us seize the oars, and follow in the bloodhound's trail."

Quick as the thought, both seamen departed, but found the vessel spoken no longer at her moorings.

"Where is Nick?"

"I had forgotten the imp in this confusion," interrupted Paul Jones, "well-reminded, he may have cast off the canoe, to prevent it falling into the hands of our enemies."

"I will go in quest of him," said Fergus, "he is doubtless awaiting us with it."

"I will not wait for tardy, ineffectual assistance," Paul Jones cried aloud, "I will control the destiny that threatens me."

"Combinations menace," continued he, "but I have skill superior to all, and have arranged, agreed, found means to save Emona!"

"What would you do?"

"Let my actions, not my words, speak. The crew are not yet a hundred yards from us. I will reach them, ere they speed another twenty."

Fergus Blake trembled as he observed his companion glance from his side, and plunge into darkness."

"Thy husband comes!" shrieked a voice, heard above the howling tempest, and rising from the roaring abyss around it.

"He is swimming to the boat!" exclaimed Fergus Blake. "It is a desperate effort, and, I fear, a fruitless one."

He had spoken truly.

Paul Jones was breasting the water manfully, making for the vessel in which Emona had been carried off.

By the reflection of the light on board, Fergus Blake could easily distinguish all that was passing.

Suddenly the actions of both parties were shut out of sight by a high ridge of ice.

The seaman, anxious for Paul Jones and Emona's safety, climbed up a block and watched with intense interest the scene here presented to his view.

Paul Jones was within a few yards of the boat, when there was the report of a musket.

"It's all over with him," said Fergus Blake. "The ball has struck the swimmer, and he is food for fishes. I must see what assistance can be rendered—No, by heavens! he rises!"

As Fergus spoke, Paul Jones was again abreast of the pirates.

The next moment he had flung himself into their boat.

He stood erect, with his drawn sword in his hand.

The attack of the assailants was repelled, and one of their number hurled over the side of the skiff.

There was a pause.

Each seemed to await, with much impatience, the moment which should deliver the other into his power.

They had not to tarry long.

In another instant a second conflict took place.

A fierce struggle ensued.

The boat rocked violently, and had it not been lashed it must have been upset, and have precipitated the opponents into the gulf beneath them.

The screams of Emona, the curses of her persecutors, and the fire-flashing blows of the cutlasses caused reason to totter on her very throne.

There was a deep splash, succeeded by a shrill cry.

The heavy plunge told that a man had been consigned to the waves.

"Die!" cried a voice of thunder.

A discharge of fire-arms and a groan followed the exclamation.

After a pause, resembling the silence of death, Paul Jones was seen to raise his body convulsively half out of the water.

He floundered.

The clear blue wave was discoloured with blood.

He was sinking, as the pirates rowed off with Emona.

The feelings of Fergus Blake were increased into a paroxysm of agony, as he beheld the lessening boat pass away.

Lost in contemplation and thoughts of his own actual danger, his straining eyes wandered over the dreary expanse around him.

Suddenly he seemed to perceive the white and fluttering habiliments of a female in the distance.

For a moment she stood at the head of the boat she was guiding.

Her arms were outstretched to receive something floating on the surface of the water.

His imperfect vision failed to make out what the object could be.

Excited by feelings which he dared not analyse, he passed signals to the stranger.

The seaman felt his heart sink within him.

A cold tremour ran through his whole frame.

The hailed vessel neared the ice-block upon which Fergus was standing.

He could distinctly observe its occupants.

In the stern sheets lay Paul Jones, pale, bleeding and haggard.

By his side a handsome young woman, who was now watching over his reviving form.

Could he really believe what he saw.

"Yes," he exclaimed, "tis Sumach. One of those pitying spirits, whose eyes rain tears for mortals' crimes, and who are permitted by fate to avert their doom."

How Sumach came thus opportunely to the rescue of Paul Jones and Fergus Blake, may be explained in a few words.

The lengthened absence of the latter from his abode beneath the load-stone rock, had excited fears in the bosom of the doting Indian.

Suspense added to her terror, and she determined to learn tidings of her favoured lover.

While prosecuting her search, she had been attracted to the spot where the capture of Emona had been effected.

She had witnessed the conflict, but had not ventured to take a part, conceiving she could better serve her friend by outwitting, instead of engaging with the enemy.

Her plan was as yet successful, for she had snatched

Paul Jones from the mercy of the wave, and was devising a scheme to save Emona.

CHAPTER XXVII.

EMONA RECEIVES HELP WHEN SHE LEAST EXPECTS IT.—ROTALDO EXACTS THE PROMISE.

A perilous journey of two hours, brought the pirates to their landing place.

Black Bill ordered the anchor to be dropped, and the men to prepare an impromptu breakfast.

While the directions were carried out, Emona remained a solitary prisoner in the boat.

"Spare me, heaven, spare me from these cruel men," were the first words she uttered. "I am prepared to die. I have no husband—for me life has no sweets.

"And yet," continued the speaker, "one little hope remains—a straw to the sinking wretch. Could I but ascertain that—"

A slight noise interrupted Emona as she was speaking.

An uncontrollable impulse caused her to rise, and turn inquiringly in every direction.

She could not distinguish from whence the sound proceeded.

A few moments elapsed, and it was again repeated.

Her keen eye rested on a seaman's cloak that had been carelessly thrown at the bottom of the boat.

The garment shook, and a man's face rose from beneath it.

Emona, as may be supposed, was startled.

Her emotion was increased, as she recognised the features of the intruder, Brandy-nosed Nick.

A finger pressed upon the lip, imposed silence on her part.

The seaman retaining his covering, crept stealthily to his companion's side.

With caution and secrecy, he ascertained that they were alone, and unobserved.

The curiosity of Emona was aroused to learn how Nick could have appeared thus marvellously.

Her desire was not long ungratified.

She smiled, trembled, turned pale, and smiled again.

"You didn't expect to see me here," said Nick, in a low voice; "in fact, after what I've gone through, I'm surprised at it myself."

"Where is my husband?" was Emona's first question.

"Oh! he's anchored in safety," said Nick, in evasive reply to calm her fears, "we shall soon return to him; in fact I'm come for such a purpose."

"You are sure of this?"

"Certain," answered the seaman. "Heaven forgive me for the innocent lie," he continued, in a low voice, to himself—

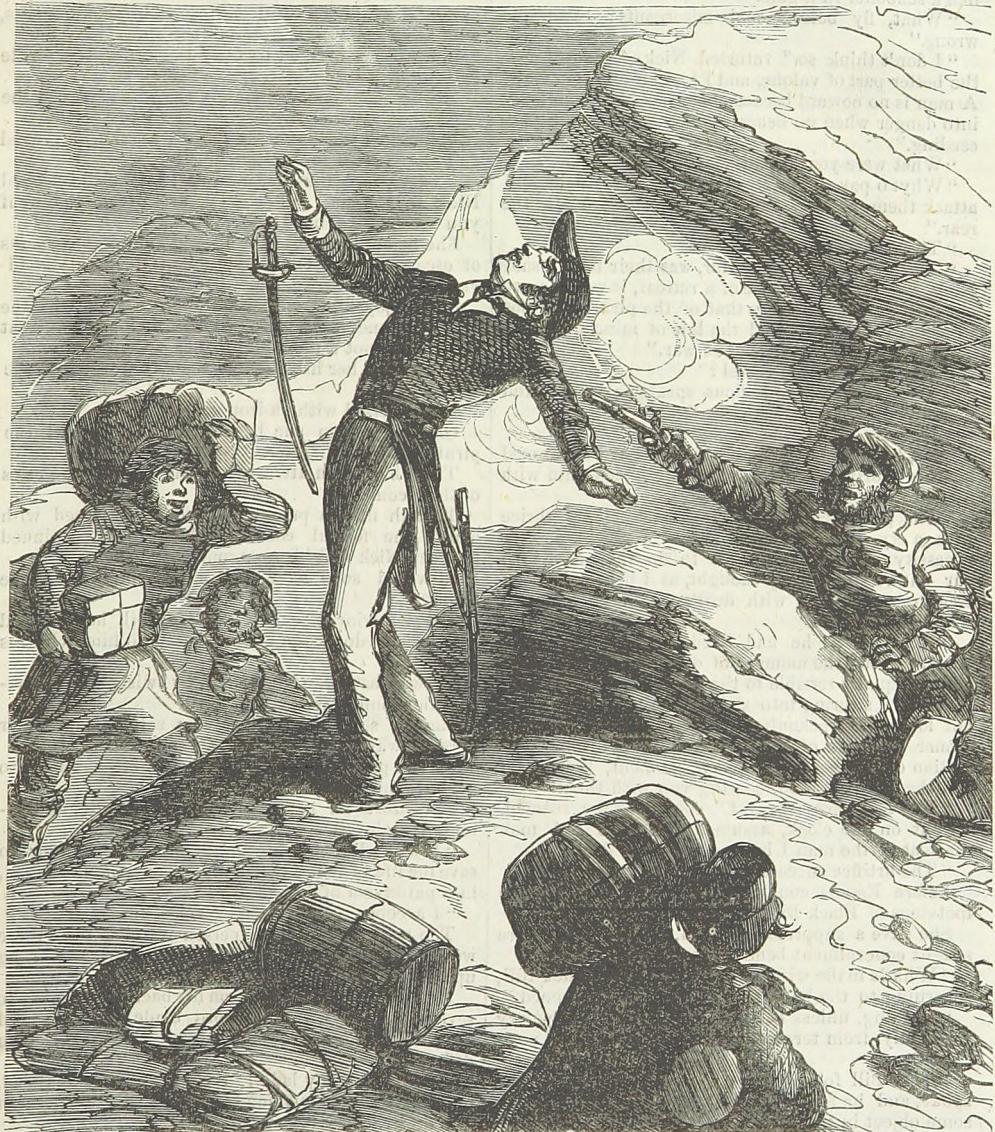
"The powers on high," exclaimed Emona, "to whose mercy I have trusted—to whose love I have confided, and to whose will I bow, has heard my ardent prayer!"

"So, moored at last, dry docked after the squall," said Brandy-nosed Nick, throwing off the cloak that had concealed him. "My head is all in shivers; it can't be from liquor, 'cos I can't get none; worse luck, it must be from thinking how we can get out of the deep water we've dropped into."

"By what mysterious means do I find you here?" asked Emona, of the seaman at her side.

"Listen, and I'll tell you all about it," he replied. "We were popping away at the infernal pirates, as you may remember, when their firing suddenly ceased.

THE FROZEN CREW OF THE ICE BOUND SHIP



FERGUS BLAKE IS SHOT BY THE PIRATES.

"Yes, yes."

"I knew in a minute that they were rounding the cape, or in other words about some mischief."

"Well?" said Emona, speaking with impatience.

"I stood for a moment, doing as usual, nothing."

"Presently," continued Nick, "I saw a head peeping up over the ice."

"A head?"

"Yes, a head, almost as big as the sun in the Madeiras."

"What, is the sun larger there than it is elsewhere?"

"Aye, twice as big, and three times as hot, but that ain't neither here nor there. I'm overhauling despatches, and can't arguify about natural history."

"Presently," resumed Nick. "I found a body annexed to the head, and a boat filled with the enemy, about to effect a landing."

"Why did you not inform Paul Jones of this?"

"Bless your innocent eyes, I hadn't time, the warmtins sailed up to me before I could say Jack Robinson."

"What did you do?"

"Made myself scarce—scudded before the wind like a schooner in a gale."

"What, fly before such miscreants? You did wrong."

"I don't think so," retorted Nick, "discretion is the better part of valour, and I had an objectin view. A man is no coward because he refuses to run blindly into danger when no necessity exists for such a proceeding."

"What were your intentions, then?"

"Whyto pay the pirates off in their own coin, and attack them, as they intended to attack us, in the rear."

"These were your tactics?"

"The first place I steered for, was their boat," said Nick. "I thought, in case of a retreat, it would serve our turn quite as well as that of the piratical swabs to whom it belonged, and the law of mine and thine isn't included in the articles of war."

"Did you gain the vessel?"

"Yes," replied the previous speaker; "but found it guarded by one of the crew."

"He gave the alarm?"

"No, before he could open his wizzen, I'd rammed home my forty-two pounder, and provided him with a birth in the cockpit."

"The poor devil," continued Nick, "rose thrice with a cry, and then sunk. What a pity it is that necessity at time compels us to do that at which our nature shudders, I thought, as I beheld a fellow creature struggling with death which he had met with at my hands."

"He died as he had lived, badly," exclaimed Emona; "and the moment of dissolution, come as it may, is equally terrible to the wicked."

"We're steering into strange latitudes, and must not loose our reckoning," resumed Nick. "I'd no sooner disposed of the boatman, than I took possession of the boat. The next moment, Black Bill and the crew returned, bearing you with them."

"You can guess the rest," continued the seaman. "I put on the cloak, assumed the voice and took the seat of the man I had sent to Davy Jones."

"The artifice succeeded, and—"

Before Emona could complete the sentence, the footsteps of Black Bill were heard approaching.

She gave a suppressed scream, as Nick once more sought concealment beneath the seaman's cloak.

"What's in the wind now?" exclaimed Black Bill, returning to the boat. "Has anything happened?"

"Nothing, unless I have uttered a plaintive cry too loudly, from terror at my present unhappy position."

Black Bill followed the eyes of Emona's as she spoke, and he fancied they were directed towards some object in the boat.

Suspicion was at once aroused in his mind.

Prudence came in time to prevent any rash action, and the pirate composed himself, as a fleeting thought passed through his mind.

When a temper, naturally ingenuous, stoops to

equivocate or dissemble, the anxious pain with which the unwonted task is laboured, often induces the hearer to doubt the authenticity of the tale.

Black Bill cast a hasty glance at Emona, and exclaimed—

"The yarn you have spun may satisfy land-lubbers, but an old salt like me ain't so easily taken aback."

Emona, agitated, hurriedly demanded—

"What do you mean?"

"That your excuse won't slue me round to the larboard."

"You have suspicions?"

"Yes, that the enemy is bearing down upon us, though we have sent him adrift without rudder or compass."

"To the boat," continued Black Bill, drawing a pistol from his belt, and calling to his companions, who were some distance from the spot.

Before they arrived to obey the order, the pirate had jumped into the vessel.

He had no sooner done so, than he removed the cloak that covered Brandy-nosed Nick.

Without uttering a word, both seamen surveyed and closed with each other.

"Jump into the boat and cast her off," shrieked Nick to Emona. "The odds are in our favour if you are quick about it."

She at once perceived it offered unexpected means of escape, and her friend seemed to have the advantage in the struggle.

So overjoyed was the desponding woman with the apparent successful issue of the undertaking, that she paused not a moment to obey the injunction.

She placed her hand on the rope that secured the vessel.

It was seized with an iron grasp.

On looking up she beheld De'il Rob and the pirates surrounding her.

They had been attracted to the spot by the cries of their comrade.

Though now a prisoner, Emona witnessed with alarm the fearful contest, which was continued between Nick and his antagonist.

It would soon have terminated fatally to the former.

The superior strength of Black Bill had enabled him to bear down the man opposed to him with his knee.

He was fast strangling Nick, by twisting his hand-kerchief round his throat.

Emona shrieked, and in vain attempted to tear herself away from the pirates who detained her.

As the prostrate seaman was fast blackening into a corpse, she screamed for pity.

Her efforts for his rescue became frantic, and intensely painful.

"I will give my life—nay more, my honour to save the life of that devoted man!" exclaimed Emona, in a paroxysm of despair.

"I accept the offer," said a voice.

The next moment the person who had said these words, with the bound of a maddened tiger, sprang upon the triumphant pirate.

He tore down Black Bill on his back, continuing to sever his wrist with his sword blade, until his hold on Nick was relaxed, and he wrestled in his own defence.

"Seize him, my lads!" the champion exclaimed, pointing with his left hand to Black Bill. "I arraign him of treachery to our band."

"This victim is mine," continued the speaker, as with the words he directed his sword to the body of Brandy-nosed Nick.

Whatever his intentions were, they were frustrated by Emona's sudden recognition of his person,

"Merciful heaven, 'tis Rotaldo!" she shrieked out; "then all hope is gone."

She sprang from the Spaniard, to whom she had advanced, and was immediately overtaken by a state of insensibility.

The pirates, who had secured Black Bill, looked with anxious astonishment upon the scene, while Rotaldo awaited with impatience the recovery of Emona.

Nick, once more free, addressed his late preserver.

"Spaniard, you have saved my life, and I thank you for it, but while I am floating on the tide of gratitude, I hope you won't say me nay to a further favour I've got to ask at your hands."

"Cuerpo di dios," exclaimed the other, "what favour can he expect from Rotaldo, who has in every respect shown himself an enemy?"

"Well, skipper, plain sailing is the best for a seaman, and I won't deny that I've hoisted my red rag against your pennant, so don't let my misconduct fall on the shoulders of others.

Let one victim serve, if you still retain any sense of honour, and duty."

As Nick continued to speak, he pointed to Emona.

"Bear in mind," he said, "what sort of cargo you have got on board; don't add insult to cruelty, or forget that you are amenable to the great commander aloft. Let me suffer alone. String me up to the yard-arm; riddle the battered hull with ball, and I'll take it kindly, if you'll only say yonder poor woman shall be respected."

"'Tis too late to parley!" replied Rotaldo. "I have taken my course, and intend to stick to it."

"If it's a bad one," said Nick.

"That's my look out," continued the Spaniard. "Our prisoner won't be left destitute, since we have driven the Indians from the border the fish and game of the region are all our own, and I am too far on the way to ware ship."

Emona, restored to animation, now spoke—

"These men are lost to every feeling of humanity, and will show no mercy; if death is to be our portion let us both meet it without useless pleading."

"Is it thus Emona speaks of Rotaldo?"

"He is a villain!"

"In that my character is not original; so are many men."

"You spare neither man in your hate or woman in your lust!"

"Ah, that reminds me of your promise."

"What promise?"

"That you would resign yourself to him who saved your companion's life."

"I spoke in wild delirium."

"Probably; but as your word is pledged, I shall expect you will regard it."

If the complexion of Emona had been hitherto white as snow, its colour during the conversation with Rotaldo had assumed that of the crimson sunset. Every lineament was tinged by the blushing hue of shame, anger and resentment.

"Infamous man!" she exclaimed, with bitterness, "though defenceless and forlorn, I have yet the courage to despise and defy your worst threats!"

"No more piping," returned Rotaldo, "we've had enough for one spell. Where's the steward?"

"Here he is," answered Nipcheese, advancing obsequiously.

"Listen, and obey me."

"It is my duty," replied the cringing dependent; I hope I have always performed it."

"It is the duty of the dog to follow the groom that feeds him," returned the haughty Spaniard. "Hark ye: put the prisoners in irons, and lead them to the snow-hut; it will serve as a place of durance till we can reach the ship."

"What me?" asked Nipcheese, in astonishment, and evincing by his countenance a considerable dislike for such a responsible office.

"Yes, you—it is all you are fit for," was the reply of Rotaldo.

"Caesar," he continued, turning to the pirate at his elbow, "bear him company, till I come up with you, and mind the milk-sop don't let the whole cargo slip through his fingers."

The negro hissed an affirmative through his white teeth.

"I hope Señor Rotaldo don't doubt my firmness in his cause," simpered the steward.

"No growling!" shouted the other. "Out with your cheese toaster if you are not afraid of the sight of it."

"I should like to run it through the cursed Spaniard's paunch," thought Nipcheese to himself, as he drew his cutlass from its scabbard.

"Now then," continued Rotaldo, "off with the prisoners while I collect together the stragglers."

To this remark the officer of inferior degree bowed acquiescence.

Like petty tyrants who possess more power than brains, he commenced his show of authority, by assuming an air of ridiculous consequence.

"Come, we can't wait here all day," he said, addressing those committed to his custody.

"By the blood of St. Magnus the martyr, you stare like wild cats instead of obeying my orders.

"Do you forget," Nipcheese continued, "that I am here in point of trust, that you presume to measure judgement and weigh reasons with me, who represent the full dignity of your judges?"

"My eyes," said Nick, "one would think that the whole ship was afire, and a hungry tar would scarce seek a better kitchen, to toast his biscuit, than just to waft it in the reek that rises out of your lubberly mouth."

"No swaggering, it won't do with me. I am resolute, and—"

Before Nipcheese could proceed, Nick was upon him.

The seaman caught up the chains with which he had been loaded to make a blow.

Agility stood the steward's friend, and he darted back, just as Rotaldo sprang forward, and arrested the arm of Nick.

"Enough of this," said the Spaniard, stamping his foot with rage, and handing the prisoner over to his comrades; "if he attempts to do further injury let him be shot down like a dog."

"Ah, do fire at an unarmed man," replied Nick, overpowered by numbers, "it's like you, isn't it? Mayhap you'll have a shower of iron rattled into your own ribs before you're aware on it."

"Insolent dog!" said Rotaldo, "did I not despise your threats I would this very moment send you to keep the long watch in Davie Jones' locker."

"The sooner the better," retorted Nick, resolutely. "I see it's all over with me."

"Blaze away, you piratical algerines," he continued. "You may send your bullets into my hull, but I'll set you an example how to die without kicking my heels at the yard-arm."

"No, no," cried Emona, throwing herself before the speaker, at whose breast several weapons were levelled, "for mercy's sake do not hold to your savage purpose."

"Let them proceed to extremities, if they like," said Nick, as he looked with some anxiety on the suppliant. "I thought I should have shown my grinders to the last; but somehow or other, when I think about you, my lass I find I'm more chicken-hearted than I expected."

"He will not offend again," exclaimed Emona,

glancing anxiously at the pirates, whom she strove to reassure by her confident looks."

Rotaldo bent his brows, and took no notice of the observation.

Suddenly an imperious gesture of his hand caused the fire-arms pointed at the captive to be withdrawn.

The action operated as a check upon the violence threatened, and permitted Emona to throw her arms around the neck of Nick, who by her advice had constrained his wrath.

Agitation for the moment deprived him of the power of utterance, and he cast a grateful smile upon his companion, in seeming recognition of the service she had rendered him.

"Till heaven itself deserts us," said Emona, "why should we despair?"

"Have I not submitted, and for your sake?" asked Nick.

"You have," replied Emona, "and doubt not that the crimes of these guilty and obdurate men will yet be punished; the prayers of the unfortunate are heard even in a desert."

"We shall have the anchor a-peak, and the ship under weigh, ere we are much older, my lass," said Nick; "we shan't be long in the bilboes if I know anything of seamanship."

Emona cast her eyes upon the ground as he added, in a whisper—

"I can't tell you exactly what I mean to do, but when I hear a signal that a sail is in sight, I shall board these loblolly boys, sword in hand."

"It is useless to struggle against destiny."

"And destiny does favour us," observed Rotaldo, who had overheard the remark. "Fate, it seems, is on our side, and we should be ungrateful if we did not take advantage of her favours."

"Forward," he continued, addressing his comrades.

They eyed their captors fiercely.

Emona clung despairingly to Nick.

Neither uttered a word as the men put themselves in motion, and prepared to conduct them to the place of confinement.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE VALKYRA, OR THE THREE SISTERS OF FATE.—FOOTSTEPS IN THE SNOW.

The pirates had scarcely quitted the spot upon which we have left them, than a boat might have been observed nearing the locality.

The rowers advanced with swiftness, but caution.

Having gained the ice-bank, they lingered like those who await the appearance of an absent person, or the approach of some expected event.

The vast canopy of heaven was dark and still charged with snow, a heavy storm of which had lately fallen, robing the earth more thickly than ever with its spotless raiment.

The gloom overshadowed the wintry landscape and frozen ocean with a deep hue, while its breathing silence was interrupted only by the low voices of the individuals who broke the solitude.

The loiterers, after a short time spent in murmuring conversation, got out of their boat and ascended the bank.

The foremost, Fergus Blake, seated himself on a small rock, in a position that permitted him to heighten the effect of his earnest language.

Come, skipper," he said, addressing Paul Jones, who stood in despondency by his side, "we mustn't blind our eyes with sorrow, when we are ordered to be on the look-out."

"We followed so sharply in pursuit," he added, "that the run-aways can't be far ahead of us, and, despite of either sail or steerage, it strikes me we shall come up with them before they can do any mischief."

"I will hope for the best," said Paul Jones, with a melancholy air; "but, Fergus Blake, you know as well as I, Rotaldo, of old."

"He is of that temperament," added the speaker, "which the dark influences desire as the tools of their agency."

"He is bold, haughty, and unrestrained by principle, I admit," returned Fergus.

"Such he is," said the other, and as such his course through life has been—onward, bloody, and tempestuous. Think you, for a moment, he will respect Emona, now that she is within his power? No, though the demon he serves should arise in his terrors, and forbid the deed."

There was a pause as Paul Jones ended. It was broken by Sumach, who now advanced with Zoe.

"Fergus," she said, "you must do Zoe and me a favour—you must allow us to leave, and go as far as yonder ice-berg."

"What freak can this be, dearest Sumach?" returned Fergus, much amazed at the request. "Some Indian observance of superstition, I suppose, but the time is too dangerous that I should permit you to pass to the spot alone."

"No buckra man or debil touch Sumach," interrupted the attendant, "when she hab two protectors, Zoe and de Great Spirit."

"Fergus," said Sumach, "this it no jesting matter, the life of Emona depends on your giving us this permission."

"For what purpose? At least let me know that."

"Remain content, no harm will come to me."

"But should you encounter the Spaniard," said Fergus Blake.

"I do not seek him, but the spot where our ancestors offered sacrifices to the heathen deities. Here will I offer up a prayer to a more merciful power than was known to them. Can you doubt its efficacy?" continued Sumach, in a voice every note of which thrilled to the heart of the listeners.

"Let her have her own will," said Paul Jones, struck by the singular appeal. "Who knows, but in her state of mind, she may do more, than ourselves."

"Something whispered to me," he continued "that heaven would prosper her."

"This is madness, raving madness," said Fergus. "Consider—"

"I can consider nothing but Emona's danger," interrupted Sumach.

"But why go alone?" asked Fergus, "we can surely accompany you."

"Your presence would frustrate the scheme I have devised. You must remain here, till I give the signal for you to advance."

"If I agree to this; have you no suspicion or fear?"

"No, none," said Sumach; "if I had any, do you think I would urge you thus?"

Fergus considered the matter for an instant, and then somewhat unwillingly gave consent to the proposal, meantime intimating that he and Paul Jones would remain where they were.

The Indians, muffled in their mantles, proceeded on their pilgrimage to the shrine of ice.

As Sumach passed from her lover, she threw back upon him a look of gratitude and affection, which dissolved, if possible, his anxiety for her safety.

"I fear these women are engaged in some wild enterprise," said Fergus Blake, after a pause.

"Indians are superstitious," replied Paul Jones,

"more especially those who frequent the frozen lands, where the mystic lore of Scandinavia has been imparted to their patriarchs, and before them they bend with an awe, no mere mortal terror can inflict on them."

"What do you suspect, then?"

"That they have gone to consult those fabulous deities, whose power they believe still exists, and whose predictions are regarded with the reverence equal to that of the christian, for his creed."

"By my faith," said Fergus, "then if this is these damsels' mission, you shall not prevail on me to go further in the devil's road with them, for you know yourself, what is got over his back is, you wot how."

"We have done wrong in allowing them to leave us," he added, "and it may bring our own destruction here, and theirs in eternity."

"What would you?"

"Instantly follow Sumach, persuade her to forego her superstitious purpose, and endeavour to circumvent our enemies by more natural means."

"I am as enthusiastic as you in this cause," replied Paul Jones, and since you consider there is danger in the adventure, we will not protract our interview, but depart at once in search of the damsels."

"It is possible that we may meet even Rotaldo himself."

"Rotaldo," echoed Paul Jones. "Should the villain come across me, he shall be welcomed with a shower of rifle balls."

"Let me get within a hundred yards of him," he continued, grasping his piece, "and all the mischief he has done me, shall be balanced with an ounce of lead."

With these words the seamen hastened onwards, and followed the track taken by Zoe and Sumach.

They had now passed out of the sight.

Sumach, whose step at first had been faint and feeble through anxiety and fatigue, began to erect her person, and walk with a pace firm and swift.

Zoe, in fact, had some difficulty to keep up with her.

She could not forbear remonstrating on the imprudence of hurrying her steps and exhausting her force by such unnecessary haste.

"Fear not, dearest Zoe," said Sumach, "the spirit which I now feel will and must sustain me through the dreadful interview."

"I could not but move with a drooping head and dejected pace," she resumed, while I was in view of one who must necessarily deem my present venture impious, and deserving only of pity or scorn."

"Euckra man no believe good and evil spirits live in red man's heart," said Zoe.

"The faith which our forefathers have implanted in our minds is despised by those who know not it's dictates, and are as ignorant of it's principle," replied Sumach, "which is as pure as the rays of the sun reflected on the wave."

As she spoke thus, in a tone which afforded much confidence to Zoe, they had attained the summit of a rising ground, whence they commanded a full view of the Arctic Stonehenge.

It consisted of a huge circle and semicircle, of standing pillars of ice, which glimmered with a greyish white in the distant sun, and projected far their long gigantic shadows.

This stupendous monument of nature has ever operated powerfully on the imaginative minds of the inhabitants of the Frozen Regions, who assert that within its mystic precincts dwell the deities known as the Valkyra of the North—three sisters employed to weave the web of fate.

They are represented as being very beautiful, and

are to be seen, as it is reported, on the Artic seas, before any great storm or calamitous event.

Imbued with the superstition of the natives, it is not to be wondered at that Sumach had resolved to apply to the supernatural beings, whose assistance was said to be so powerful that no mortal could withstand them, to aid her in the search of Emona.

Being unaware of the necessary forms to compel the appearance of the magical trio, she determined to visit the necromantic cavern of Odin, and summon the familiar, to aid her in the daring project.

As Sumach stood hesitating and abandoning her mind to the course of serious reflection, meditation was unexpectedly interrupted by some one touching her shoulder.

She looked round, and saw a figure wrapped in a dark and ample mantle.

It was the object of her quest, and no other than Skulda herself.

The ice-witch had seen the Indian from the brow of the neighbouring ice-mount, and had descended through a small ravine, which concealed her until she came with noiseless step so close that the maiden turned round at the touch.

"For what purpose do you seek Skulda?" asked the witch. "Know you not that none can enter these domains save those who acknowledge the power of its mistress?"

"I am thy devotee," answered Sumach, whose mind was strongly fortified by superstition. "I come to crave your assistance in a matter that concerns my happiness."

"Name your wishes, and Skulda will listen to them."

"It is to aid me in delivering a young and beautiful girl from the hands of evil men, who have borne her off from one who loves and respects her."

"His name?"

"Paul Jones."

"In that case I cannot promise you help," said Skulda, starting at the announcement, "as it falls within the province of the Valkyra, in whom you must alone rely."

"Have you no power?"

"I was not always what I am," continued the witch, with a sigh. "There was a time when Skulda was wise, mighty and commanding, before whom the young stood abashed, and the old uncovered their grey heads.

"Hear me," continued the speaker, "for as the friend of Paul Jones, you will hear me utter complaints which have never sounded into mortal ears, and which in mortal ears shall never sound again."

Sumach made no remark, as she continued in surprise to listen to the strange recital of the witch.

"But I will be again what I ought," Skulda cried out, extending her lean and withered arm, "the queen and protectress of these wild and neglected regions. I will be her whose foot the waves wet not, save by her permission, even though its rage be at its highest madness, whose robe the whirlwind respects when it rends the house-rigging from the roof-tree! When such a time comes, and come it must, let Paul Jones regard his promise, nor forget his challenge. Thus it run, if my memory serves me—

"And now, by this token I cast in the waves,
I woo me a bride from the fathomless caves;
And be she but fair, by the heavens above,
I will love her as well as a mortal can love."

Sumach, alarmed at the mysterious lines, would fain have departed, but the witch, with an effort, detained her.

"You are going to leave!" she exclaimed, "when I am about to conduct you into the presence of the deities you have sought."

"I have suffered enough," replied Sumach, faintly. "I can no more."

"Silly girl," muttered the witch, "has my foolish tale frightened you; think no more of it than a jest. I bring you no evil."

"But Paul Jones——"

"Is safe from any harm at my hands," returned Skulda; "as a proof of which, I am about to obey your wishes. If his intentions are honourable, the Valkyra, at my intercession, will grant you the assistance you require."

"Bring them before me," said Sumach, after a pause, during which she had satisfied her scruples; "upon the successful issue of the meeting, I will rest my hopes."

At these words Skulda waved her crutched staff.

She muttered various enchantments for the appearance of the three mystic sisters.

At their powerful influence a violent tempest arose.

The very region itself appeared to recoil as the incantation proceeded.

Every succeeding instant the storm increased its fearful vehemence.

Suddenly a dark cloud appeared in the horizon.

It floated over the frozen ocean with the greatest rapidity.

In another minute, the murky vapour had reached Sumach.

A hot sulphureous atmosphere oppressed her, and a film of blood dimmed her sight as she beheld the Valkyra issue from the surrounding gloom.

Skulda, having performed her office, retired again to her sombre abode, leaving the eldest of the sisters to advance.

She addressed herself to Sumach to the following effect—

"Daughter of mortality, we, the three Valkyra, attend to learn thy bidding. If thou askest aught that is good of us, we are ready to obey thee."

"But," continued the speaker, "if thou wouldst have us aid thee in an unworthy deed, it were better that thou shouldst not open thy lips, for vain would be thy entreaties."

"Mysterious beings," answered Sumach, "I would crave your services in gaining for me the whereabouts of a poor young damsel who has been torn from her husband, and sent hither to pine in exile and, perchance, dishonour."

"Her name is Emona," said the second sister; "at least, so Skulda has informed us."

"And she has spoken truly."

"Emona is too virtuous to yield to any terms that would bring her into ruin or disgrace," remarked the eldest of the Valkyra.

"An exalted and noble spirit like hers," she continued, "will bend to any contumely rather than obtain a release from persecution by a life of infamy."

"May I count upon your assistance?"

"A short time will prove how far we can aid you," returned the third of the Valkyra. "But our lips are forbid to speak further, since the scioner of our power has dared by his presence to break the charm that would have served you in the extremity."

At the words, the three Valkyra vanished as quickly as the transient flame of a discharged musket from its tube, leaving Sumach in a state of awe and amazement.

The prediction of the prophetess was true, with respect to the advent of strangers, for on turning, the bewildered woman observed Fergus Blake and Paul Jones approaching her.

"Why have you disobeyed me," she said, "and ventured to visit a spot which the Indian, in her belief, considers holy?"

Fergus smiled scornfully.

"Good Sumach," he cried, "reserve such language for the rude savage who bends to the idol of wood, and implores it to bestow success on undertakings that defy even the powers of reasoning man."

"You know my tenets," he continued. "I have long been inaccessible both to fear and superstition."

"Doubt on, vain sceptic, if you please," replied Sumach, somewhat angered, "but revile not those who regard the land of spirits with eyes different to thine own."

"Be not an idle and laughing scoffer," she continued, "who would level art with ignorance, and reduce power to weakness, by disbelieving and turning into ridicule a subject beyond the grasp of shallow intellect."

Fergus was conscience-struck, and remained silent for an instant ere he replied—

"Perhaps I was wrong; let the issue determine."

"I am one who have no reason to doubt supernatural power," said Paul Jones, advancing. "This region, which was sacred to the Gods of old Valhalla, may, for aught I know, maintain at the present time the mystic influence it is asserted it possessed in the past. I and Fergus have divined your errand hither: say, how have you sped?"

In a few words Sumach gave him the history of her meeting with the three Valkyra, and its consequences.

Paul Jones cast up his eyes and raised his hands to heaven.

Thankful for the probable escape of Emona from her evil companions, he hastily added—

"I see we shall have her yet. I will place her in security, and endeavour to renounce these shores for ever."

"No more can Paul Jones!" he cried, "carry the Black Flag, and its yet blacker name, and may heaven direct him to a better course than that which his life as yet held."

"Your prayer is heard," replied Sumach, solemnly, "and you will live to redeem what you have done amiss."

At this juncture, Zoe, whose absence had not been observed, suddenly made her appearance among the startled group.

This incident for the moment caused considerable uneasiness, as the countenance of the Indian girl betrayed unusual emotion, and all knew that since their enemies were somewhere in the neighbourhood, they might come upon them at any time.

It was necessary, therefore, that the utmost caution should be observed, as a surprise by numbers would render the case of the friends of Emona a hopeless one.

"Have you seen them?" asked Paul Jones, in hurried accents.

"Iss, massa, that is——"

"Well, well," continued Fergus, impatiently.

"Dey not berry far off," continued Zoe, with provoking coolness. "When dey come to take Missie Sumach, me fight for her, and kill one, two, four."

"I ask again," said Paul Jones, in a frenzy, "have you fell in with the pirates who have seized Emona?"

"Fell in, no me fall out with the nasty rascals."

"Where did you meet them?"

"Me no meet 'em at all, they gone long way, over big tract, to wigwam on de ice-field."

"She must mean the sno-whut," said Paul Jones.

"How do you know this?" asked Fergus Blake. "You say you have not encountered our foes."

"Zoe sly — debilish sly," chuckled the ebony maiden, in whose laughing eyes there was all the knavery, and more than all the drollery of the Spanish Picaroon. "Me go to de spot where de snow drift and not fall. Dere me see de trace of footsteps, one, two, forty.

"Ah, ah, me say!" continued Zoe, after stopping to laugh, "me got scent where nasty fox hide himself. Me creep and creep, where de snow lie thick, and find more footprint."

The speaker having successfully delivered herself of another cachinnation, proceeded—

"Presently me come upon some smoke, which come out of top of house; me smell fire, me hear voice; especially dat nigger fellow you call, Caesar."

"Maiden, you must guide us to this spot," said Paul Jones, grasping the hand of Zoe with the fervour of friendship. "Through your ingenuity we need no longer abandon ourselves to despair.

"Let us at once," he continued, turning to his companions, "apply immediate means to circumvent the artifices of the destroyers of my happiness."

"We will instantly depart in search of them!" exclaimed his associate, "since their track has been discovered in the snow which they have traversed."

"Humph! then Fergus Blake no longer hesitates to put faith in the prophecy of the Valkyra," cried Sumach, as she observed him advance to carry out its completion.

CHAPTER XXIX.

FOOTSTEPS IN THE SNOW.

The artic sun shone brightly as the little party issued from the abode of the Valkyra, and wound its way among the waving ice-fields that surrounded it.

Zoe, as scout, led in the van, while her armed companions followed in the track she pursued, which was indicated by the footsteps she had discovered in the snow.

There was a solemnity in the scene that might have called forth other and more sombre feeling even than those which the assemblage possessed.

The country into which they were plunging was of a grand and gloomy character.

The wilderness of ice lifted their pillars ever and anon over head, and formed a series of domes and arches without end, that had for ages overshadowed the sterile soil.

Gigantic blocks formed fences, as singular as they were, for the most part, impenetrable.

At times open glades were visible, broken only by colossal icicles hanging from the neighbouring glacier-like cables, or arms of an oriental banyan.

The vague prospect opened by scenes such as these, stirred the imagination and produced a feeling of solitude in the mind of Paul Jones, greater than would have been under circumstances different from the present.

The gait of the travellers over the road, if such it could be called, was at first rapid and cheery.

By-and-bye, having penetrated deeper into the ice-block, they found their progress impeded by a thousand unseen difficulties.

These interruptions promised to make the journey longer than anticipated.

Zoe, at intervals, caught the fresh foot-prints of the pirates and her comrades, with pleasure, reflected that before long they must reach the place where they expected to find them encamped.

They had proceeded some distance, when Zoe turned into a bye-way, leaving the direct path they had pursued.

"We are glad of your guidance," said Paul

Jones, observing the action, "but are you not wrong in diverging from the road that sweeps before us."

"No, follow me," said the girl, though in some trepidation.

"I am convinced by the footprints in the snow, that the road we are traveling is the one for our purpose."

"And yet," said Fergus Blake, "somewhat alarmed at a difference of opinion, where unanimity was so much more desirable."

"Zoe ought to know best, as she has been here before us."

"It is the safest way," she replied; "at all events for the present."

"My good girl," said Paul Jones, kindly, but positively. "Here is the road as plain as day, and we must follow."

"You will repent you ever took it."

"What do you mean?"

"It is dangerous."

"Sometimes all roads are so," said Paul Jones, his patience failing when he found Zoe could give no better reason for her opposition. "Let us continue; Emona is awaiting us, and we must lose no further time by delay."

The animation, which had a few minutes before beamed forth on every look and gesture of Zoe, now gave way to a deep dejection.

She seems as anxious now to linger in the rear, as as she had been before, to preserve a bold position in the front.

Her eyes wandered timorously on every object around her, as though they concealed a lurking enemy.

Suddenly a stifled cry aroused Paul Jones, as he proceeded onward with his little party.

A thousand strange and appalling conceits crept into their mind.

In a moment, they remembered the hints of Zoe.

"'Tis the man I saw," she exclaimed.

"Foolish girl, why did you not tell us at once of this."

"Me no want to frighten Missie."

"Your concealment of facts may lead us to destruction."

Paul Jones had scarcely uttered these words, when an exclamation from Zoe drew the attention to a figure stalking through the ice-blocks at a distance.

In the growing twilight, it looked like that of some gigantic demon.

At first it appeared as if this solitary being was approaching in a direct line.

But presently Paul Jones perceived that he was bending his course away to the left.

He paused for a moment, and regarded the stranger.

"Friend or enemy," exclaimed Paul Jones, dashing forward, and followed, though not without hesitation, by his companions.

At the sound of his voice, the addressed started and looked up.

Without betraying surprise, or a disposition to beat a retreat, he advanced to meet Paul Jones coming towards him.

He walked rapidly, waving his hand all the while with an impatient gesture, as if to command a halt.

A command at once obeyed by the silent observers.

It was now that as the spectral figure drew nigh, its stature appeared to grow less and less.

The wild lineaments with which fancy had invested it, faded from sight, leaving the phantom of a

mere man, without a single characteristic to delight the soul of wonder.

The transformation was so great and unexpected, that even Paul Jones could scarce forbear to laugh at the features of Miamas became revealed to view.

The soft, dove-like eyes of Sumach sparkled with the rays of revived hope, as she welcomed her former lover.

He returned the greeting, but demanded with gravity of Paul Jones—

"Why does the Yengese shout so loud and merrily, when murdering foemen hover around him?"

"I trust you may be mistaken," said the other, with much more seriousness of manner. "But in truth I took you for no other than the redoubtable Flying Dutchman."

The superstitious Indian slightly frowned at the remark.

Paul Jones observed this, and wishing to excuse his late ill-considered remark continued—

"You must allow that our terrors were ridiculous enough, when they would convert an excellent man like you into a fiend."

"Is our peril imminent?" asked Fergus Blake.

"You are like to have trouble," was the Indian's curt reply.

"Not now, I hope, with such an one as you are to help us out of difficulty."

"Your enemies are numerous," said Miamas, "and are even now scattered about the path you are taking."

"If a rencontre should be inevitable," exclaimed Paul Jones, "you will decamp with the females that will be entrusted to your care, while I and Fergus cover the retreat."

"Ay," added the latter, "we can at least check the assailants, if we die for it."

"We must depart, and see what help there is for us."

"Our first object," said Paul Jones, "is the safety of Emona."

"I know her place of imprisonment," rejoined Miamas, "but we shall not reach it without danger; the Hurons are before us, behind us, and all around."

"What should we do?"

"Follow in the track I shall pursue," replied Miamas. "I will lead the way, do you follow at a distance."

"Why not keep together?"

"It would bring the cut-throats right upon you."

"How so?"

"Simply asked, and simply answered," said Miamas. "They deem me a friend, you an enemy —were it wise to be in company?"

"Miamas knows the Huron's trail," interrupted Sumach; "trust to him, and we shall not fault."

"He shall take his own course," said Paul, "and I am assured it is the best."

These words, uttered with a good countenance, showed how much the speaker's confidence preserved him from his previous fears.

Miamas proceeded to marshal the company.

He earnestly impressed upon all the necessity of maintaining a strict silence upon the march.

He directed them to follow scrupulously every order he gave.

"If you see me wave my hand above my head," were his last instructions, "bring yourselves immediately to a halt."

"If you see me drop upon the ground," continued the Indian, fly to the nearest cover, for you may be sure that there is mischief, or mischievous people nigh at hand; bat, trusting in the great spirit, we will circumvent them all."

The confederates wandered on under the guidance of Miamas.

Half an hour's journey brought them to a low cabin of logs, that had been deserted by the Indian tribes who had encamped there in their frequent incursions of the northern countries.

It stood on the verge of an abyss, in which a river could be heard, rushing tumultuously as if among broken icy fragments and other obstructions.

It was one of those double cabins, usually found among the savage nations, which, while they form a rude homestead, serve also the purpose of a fortress to the inmates, when attacked by a hostile tribe or the savage animals of the neighbourhood.

A line of palisades, firmly constructed, surrounded the building.

This being directly in the centre, and joining the palisades at the sides, divided the enclosure into two little yards.

The one was thus in front, the other in the rear.

In these there was room sufficient for horses and cattle, as well as for the garrison when called upon to repel assailants.

The space behind extended to the verge of the river's bank, which, falling down a sheer precipice, required no defence, and seemed never to have been provided with it.

The space in front circumscribed a portion of the ice-field which here was destitute of either block, eminence or fragment.

Such had been the original plan and condition of the fortified dwelling, which, manned by six or seven courageous defenders, might have bidden defiance to twice their number who attempted to storm it.

The stockade, in the present time, was in a great part destroyed, either by the rigour of the climate or the attack of an enemy, especially in front.

The stakes, in this part, seemed to have been rooted up by the piercing northern blast.

Some appeared to have fallen actually from decay.

The right wing, or cot, lay a black and mouldering pile of logs, evidently the work of some grim-visaged war.

The only part of the tenement yet standing was the cot on the left-hand.

This consisted but of a single room.

A glance would show it.

It was almost roofless, and ready to fall.

Nothing could be more truly cheerless and forbidding than the appearance of this ruined pile, as it reared its head with a thick covering of snow.

The hoarse and dismal rush of the river below added double horror to its melancholy aspect.

But whatever repugnance others might feel at such a dismal scene, it was witnessed with rapture by Paul Jones, for within the dismal shelter he knew he should find consolation.

It was within this gloomy tenement his wife was imprisoned.

Let us pass from its exterior to its interior, and observe the occupants.

The prisoners, Emona and Nick, are heavily manacled, and, to prevent any attempt at escape, are fastened with stout hempen lashes to the strong uprights which support that part of the roof which still remains firm and in tolerable order.

Emona is dejected and pale, but resolution is imprinted on her marble countenance.

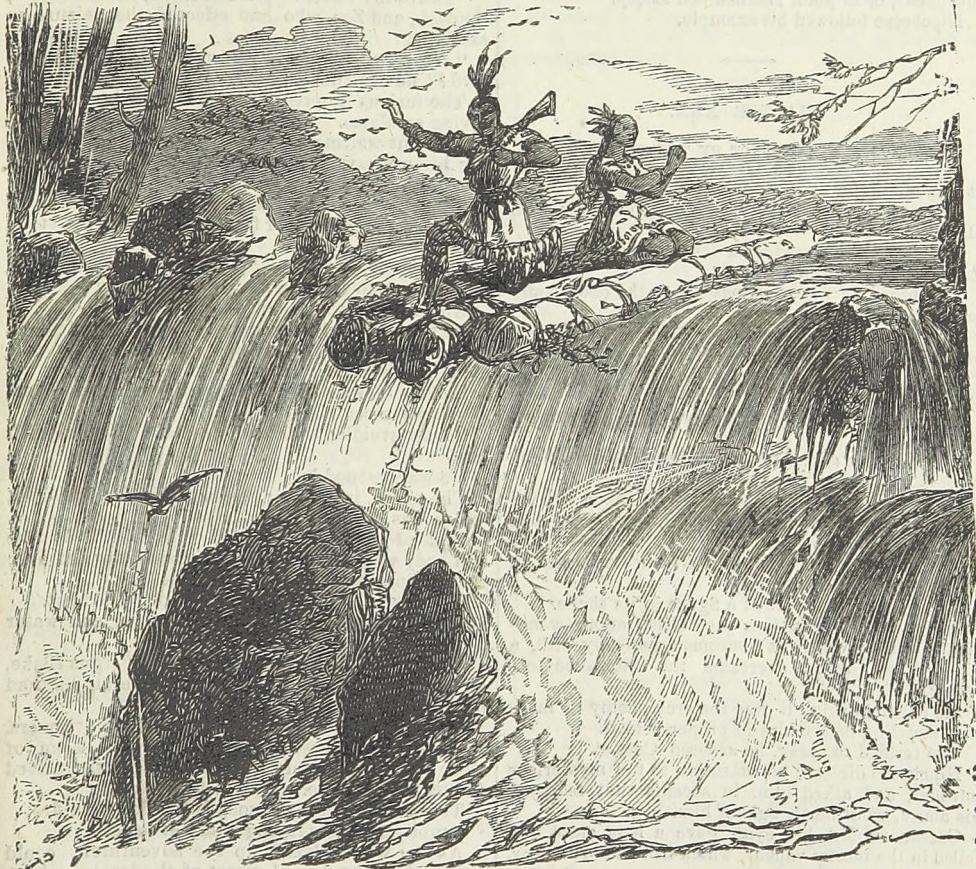
Nick bears his fate with a calm composure.

"Never despair, though you be five fathoms deep in the bilboes," is his motto.

His last sentiment in the world will be all of a piece with his whole practice.

"For if they wet my whistle before they squeeze it to ejaculated, "I shall go off like a lamb, wish-

THE FROZEN CREW OF THE ICE-BOUND SHIP



ADRIFT NEAR THE RAPIDS.

ing the devil may fly away with all our enemies."

He is as jovial as ever under disagreeable circumstances.

His voice still lusty.

And his brown, weather-beaten face lit up with the smile that usually plays upon it.

Of the gaolors, Caesar and Nipcheese, it is unnecessary to remark.



Having seen that the captives were secured, the former, with an odious grin, informed them that they saw their place of lodging for the night.

"Yes," said Nipcheese, "and it appears to me to be a very pleasant, retired spot, where a man may reflect on the vicissitudes of human life without much fear of interruption. What do you say, Caesar?"

"Ay, ay, it will do," grunted the negro; "they'll have no one to overhaul them here."

"They will be as safe here as in the snow-hut to which we were directed to take them."

"It is fortunate we fell in with the caboose," said Caesar; "we have saved ourselves a great deal of trouble, and have only half the distance to reach the ship."

"I say, messmates," said Nick, "you might as well do me a favour while you remain here."

"Humph, messmate, that's familiar," thought Nipcheese, standing on his present dignity.

"A favour?" he continued, "What is it?"

"Just to take off my bracelets," answered Nick, intimating the irons that encircled his wrist.

"Can't do it," said Nipcheese, satirically.

Caesar, having satisfied himself that the prisoners were secure, intimated his intention to Nipcheese of taking a short nap, and was soon in the arms of Morpheus, or in plain English fast asleep.

Nipcheese followed his example.

CHAPTER XXX.

FERGUS BLAKE IS SHOT BY THE PIRATES.

It was midnight.

The torch which lit the lonely cabin, was still blazing.

A thick vapour rose from its flame, and obscured its more distant portions.

The broad pathway or passage to the door could scarcely be discerned.

The light struggling through the gloom only imperfectly revealed the figures within the building.

The prisoners, as far as their position would allow, appeared to be asleep.

Their watchers fatigued, seemed also in a drowsy state.

All at once a slight noise reached the ears of the restless Nipcheese.

Half dozing, yet half awake, he looked around him, as if to ascertain whether fancy or reality had conjured up the sound!

It was now that the eye of Nipcheese rested in the direction of the doorway.

He thought he discerned a figure in its shade.

After steadily regarding the object for a few moments, during which it continued perfectly still, a superstitious terror overcame the astonished observer.

He began to think it was the arch enemy of mankind standing before him in proper person.

Too terrified to speak, he aroused Caesar.

Nipcheese directed his attention to the mysterious intruder, and asked him, in accents that betrayed his alarm, what he thought of him.

Caesar rubbed his eyes, gave a long stare, and failed in the murky vapour, which filled the chamber, to recognise his features.

"How the devil has he found us out?"

"Who the devil is he?"

These were the questions the bewildered pirates put.

"I'm not afraid," said Caesar, after a pause. "I will address him."

With this, the speaker got up and staggered dreamily forward.

"Ah," he exclaimed, as he drew nearer. "I have it now."

"Whom," continued Caesar, "do you think your satanic majesty turns out to be?"

"I really can't imagine," replied Nipcheese, in a voice a key lower than its previous pitch.

"No other than Paul Jones; a rare prize for us. Senor Rotaldo will come down with a handsome round handful of Chili dollars for his capture."

"Had we better wait till—"

"What is it brings you hither?" said Caesar placing the muzzle of his pistol to the breast of Paul Jones. "You rush on death if you stir."

"Bethink you who you speak to," cried Paul Jones.

"Surrender yourself."

"Never."

As Paul Jones spoke, the negro found himself grappled by two nervous assailants.

A third snatched the pistol from his vigorous hold.

Caesar's arms were pinioned.

This was scarcely the work of a moment, and he was a prisoner before he could offer any resistance.

"Bravo my lasses!" cried Fergus, for it was he, Sumach, and Zoe, who had effected the seizure so skilfully.

"What had we better do with this aged black bird?" he continued,

The furious imprecations of the negro were now giving an alarm.

Without waiting for a reply to his question, fearing his cries would bring assistance before Paul Jones could prevent the act, Fergus had drawn his knife across the throat of Caesar.

"Since you court your fate," he exclaimed, "take it."

A struggle of the most terrific kind, now ensued. The wounded negro dashed forward to the door. His progress was stopped by Paul Jones.

He turned to confront his previous assailants.

Fergus Blake aimed a blow at him with his discharged pistol.

Had it taken effect, it must have instantly terminated the conflict.

Caesar avoiding the seaman's stroke grappled with him.

He was rescued by the others.

The negro, in despair, again made for the door, which was now unguarded.

Blinded by the blood with which his face and body was covered he, in his haste, hurried over the precipice at the rear of the dwelling.

A hollow plunge was heard the next moment.

It marked his descent into the abyss and water beneath.

"It's all over with him," muttered Fergus Blake, as he returned to the hut, from which he had issued to pursue his enemy.

Paul Jones' first consideration was the prisoners.

It was total obscurity as he released them of their bonds and fetters, the light being extinguished during the struggle.

The ignited torch was soon succeeded by a fire.

Ample materials laying ready at hand.

As the flame blazed up the adventurers could better view the dismal aspect of the lonely and desolate cabin.

The looks of Paul Jones did not dwell long upon the dreary ruin.

They were soon cast upon the countenance of his wife, concealed so long by the outer darkness and gloom.

It was even paler and warmer than he feared to find it.

Her eye shone with an unnatural lustre as it met his own.

She threw her arms around his neck.

She caressed and gazed upon him piercingly, but without speaking or indeed seeming able to utter a word.

"Be of good heart, Emona," the husband cried, replying to her placid regards, "we are fortunate—you are saved."

"But," continued he, "we must not remain idle; our work is but half finished, our security must be effected—hereafter our escape."

"Captain," said a voice, whispering in Paul Jones' ear.

He turned, and discovered Nick by his side.

A hearty grip of the hand assured him that his fidelity was not forgotten.

"Yes," said Nick, in answer to his companion's greeting, "here I am, all my timbers repaired, and ready for a cruise to whatever point of the compass you may choose to steer."

"Come, mistress," he continued, addressing Emona, "don't be down-hearted, swab the spray from your bows, and coil up your spirits; our enemies have more hands 'tis true, and superior weight of metal, what then? Dame Fortune, you know, is not always with the strongest."

"You are a worthy fellow," said Paul Jones, "and I believe as good a seaman as ever set face to weather; your kindness to Emona—"

"Belay, belay, captain," interrupted Nick, "I'm no such wonder. Bless you, there's as true men as I, and among the ragamuffins of the El Malachor too, if they dared but to show themselves."

"Indeed?"

"I know it, some carry with it a high hand, such as that thief, Nipcheese, but he was to be bought; he'd sooner have stolen eggs out of a hen-coop than run his thick skull against a brace of bullets. He was left sprawling in the scuffle just now like a frog in a fit."

"Ah, I had forgotten him," said Fergus Blake, "he must not escape, he will do us mischief."

With these words the speaker hurried out of the cabin.

While waiting with impatience his return, a low whistle was heard, and presently the sound of approaching footsteps.

Miamas entered abruptly.

"Friends," he exclaimed, "danger is at hand, and we may have to take refuge in the open region."

"What in the name of heaven is the matter?" demanded Paul Jones, taking the alarm that had seized the rest of his companions.

"Fergus Blake is already a prisoner."

Blood was banished from the cheek of Sumach, as she ejaculated—

"And you here to tell it, false hearted coward; had you one tithe of the spirit I gave you credit for, you would have rushed to the rescue, or left your lifeless body on the spot."

"Had I done so, Sumach would have been sacrificed," the Indian replied with a stern coldness.

The report of firearms now resounded in the distant valley.

"Tis the death knell of my rival," continued Miamas. "The Yengeese wait not for edict or tribunal—their captive is shot without the form of either."

The announcement struck Sumach dumb, and she stood in an attitude of despair without speaking a word.

"If they kill me, they will not do amiss," murmured Miamas, regarding her.

Throwing off his stupefaction, and recovering his spirits he once more addressed Paul Jones.

"We are in the very lion's den," the Indian cried aloud, "in the hiding-place, and head quarters of the cut throats that seek to destroy us; but by the Great Spirit I will save you from them, and sacrifice my life to prove Sumach has ill-judged me."

Paul Jones would have replied, but his words were cut short by those of Miamas.

"Hark, they are upon us, and in numbers," he continued; "if you be not besotted, drag the women by the hand, and follow me."

As he spoke the Indian leapt towards the door.

A cry from Paul Jones arrested him.

He perceived that Sumach had fainted in the seaman's arms.

"I will take charge of her!" Miamas exclaimed; "you look to the others."

The Indian snatched Sumach up into his arms as if she had been but a feather.

Again he sprang forward, when he was brought to a stand by a far more exciting impediment.

A shriek from Zoe, uttered in sudden terror, was echoed by a laugh strangely wild, and expressive of equal triumph and derision.

Looking to which the eyes of Miamas fell upon a commanding figure.

It was that of the Spaniard, the malicious and revengeful Rotaldo.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE LAST EFFORT.

There was a grim smile on the writhing features of Rotaldo, as he stood, musket in hand, on the pathway.

"Un buen dia," exclaimed he, with a mockery of friendly accost, and stepping that moment into the interior of the cabin.

To add to the sight which chilled the blood of the spectator, there were to be seen over the Spaniard's shoulder the gleaming eyes, and heard, behind his back, the malignant laughter of some of his equally fierce and ferocious associates.

"To the door, if thou art a man," cried Miamas in a voice like the blasts of a bugle.

He cast Sumach from his arm as he spoke.

He set the example of attack by leaping against the breast of the daring intruder.

Rotaldo and Miamas closed and struggled.

Both fell together across the threshold.

Paul Jones, obeying the Indian's call, with desperate and frantic ardour, stumbled over the bodies of the prostrate men.

This mishap pitched him headlong into the passage.

He however escaped certain death by the accident, three musket balls having been poured upon him from a distance of scarce as many feet.

"Fire," the voice of Miamas was heard to cry.

The next moment a shot struck one of the pirates.

The cry of the flying assailant was echoed by fifty comrades, who were now advancing.

The foremost were within two yards of Paul Jones.

They were levelling their weapons at his almost defenceless person.

In this extremity he received unexpected aid.

From the interior of the cabin poured an incessant volley.

Not one of the foremost pirates escaped the deadly aim.

All fell, either badly or mortally wounded.

Brandy-nosed Nick was heard shouting—

"That's right, my lasses—pour shot into their hulls, broadside for broadside, let 'em have it as warm as they can take it. Damme, if women oughtn't to man the navy."

This remark recalled to Paul Jones his ally's tactics.

He had armed himself, Emona and Zoe, with all the available fire-arms, and by giving his companions necessary directions, and placing them in ambuscade had turned their feeble services to a most satisfactory account.

"Bravely done, and skilfully executed," cried Paul Jones, to whom this unexpected assistance, and its successful results imparted a degree of hope and assurance not before felt.

Up to this moment his feeling had been the mere frenzy of despair.

He now rushed towards the only foe who seemed capable of resistance.

Before he was aware of it, he was enfolded in the arms of his adversary.

Suddenly there came a shriek of agony.

A jet of warm, hot blood gushed over the seaman's face.

The pirate had been struck by the hand of Miamas, and, after a convulsive struggle, fell a dead man at the feet of Paul Jones.

Zoe and her companions, who still kept their post and maintained their fire, waxed resolute as they saw the enemy draw back.

The successful, and wholly unexpected resistance of the little party, resulting in so fatal a manner to the advanced guard of the pirates, had struck terror into the main body, who retired in some confusion to deliberate on the best means of circumventing the enemy.

It was in this moment of confusion that Miamas sprang to the side of Paul Jones.

He caught the seaman by the hand, as he was hastily recharging his piece.

The Indian addressed his companion in a voice that betrayed the deepest agitation, though his countenance was veiled by the darkness.

"Waste no more powder, but up and away; if we remain here we shall soon be numbered with these wretches," said Miamas, looking and pointing to the dead bodies of the pirates. "Their comrades have retired but to return in greater numbers."

"It needs not to speak of it," returned Paul Jones, as he added, hastily, "time presses, but we must take advantage of it; the ice-fields are open, we must retreat again to them."

"No, that would be certain death," cried Miamas. "Be of good heart, I have formed a scheme for our liberty, which executed with boldness will I trust succeed."

"We must pass to the back of this dwelling at once," the Indian continued.

"There is no escape by this means," said Paul Jones, "as it leads only to the precipice that overhangs the river."

"It is our only road to freedom, nevertheless."

"But how are we to drop over a sheer altitude of fifty feet?"

"I can obtain rope."

"But should we succeed in making the descent we have no boat to stem the river beneath."

"Here is wood enough in this rude dwelling to form a raft," said the Indian, "let us commence our labour, and lower the timber over the height."

Obeying the order of Miamas, the inmates of the dwelling, in a very short time dislodged several planks from its roof.

These were at once conveyed to the spot the Indian had pointed out.

In order to drop the wood upon the ice-bank of the river the adventurers had to ascend a precipice considerably higher than the one at the rear of their temporary fortress.

Success attended their endeavours.

Everything necessary for forming a raft was in a few minutes on the margin of the flowing current beneath them.

Miamas next threw a cord over the edge of the precipitous escarpment.

He advanced to the brink to see that it had fallen to a landing place.

Having assured himself of this, and the firmness of the knot, he desired Paul Jones to make the first descent.

The seaman, twining his left arm securely round Emona, grasped the rope tightly with his right hand.

Without pausing, he leant forward and pushed himself deliberately over the brow of the precipice.

For a moment the rope vibrated with the shock.

As Emona felt herself thus swinging to and fro, between heaven and earth, she could scarcely repress a scream.

Her brain reeled as she gazed dizzily downwards.

The altitude must have been upwards of one hundred and fifty feet.

Involuntarily her head sank over her shoulders.

She closed her eyes.

Had it not been for the powerful efforts of her supporter she would assuredly have fallen.

The rope still continued its fearful oscillations.

With one arm only disengaged, and the other encumbered by Emona, it was impossible for Paul Jones to steady the cording now veering to every point of the compass.

The crowning point from which he leapt into the air projected at least two feet beyond the main body of the precipice, consequently he could not touch it even with his foot to relieve his course.

He had nothing for his guidance but the shifting rope.

Imminent indeed was his present peril.

The strain upon his sinews and muscles was so great that it appeared no longer endurable.

Paul Jones' energies were marvellously vigorous.

His grasp of the rope as tenacious as ever.

Suddenly his strength failed him, but 'twas only as he alighted in safety with his fainting burden upon the river bank.

The descent of Miamas and Sumach was less perilous, Paul Jones being able from the bottom of the ice-cliff to tighten and guide the rope that bore them.

Brandy-nose Nick and Zoe followed the Indians, who were soon by the side of Emona, and engaged in rapidly constructing the impromptu raft.

The latter fugitives were more than sixty feet from the bank, while descending by the rope, when an incident occurred, that rendered their situation even more dangerous than that of their companions.

Looking upward, and directed by outcries, they beheld the malignant and exulting aspect of the Spaniard, Rotaldo.

He had discovered the mode of flight, and hesitated not in taking the revenge left in his power.

It was evident, from his gestures and ferocious mien, he had resolved to inflict some torture on his enemy before destroying him.

He first shook the cord bearing Nick with all his force.

The desperate pirate next had recourse to another more cruel expedient.

By immense exertion, he drew up the cord some feet.

"Maledizione," he exclaimed, as he suddenly let it drop.

This terrible fall almost dislodged Nick, who, with a force equal to that of the foe managed to maintain his hold though thus vigorously shaken.

Despairing of carrying into effect his intended design, Rotaldo at last resolved to gratify his hatred by a "grand coup."

Uttering a yell, he coolly proceeded to saw through the rope with his cutlass.

The weapon had scarcely grazed it, when an arrow from the bow of Miamas sped on its work of death.

The poisoned dart smote the Spaniard betwixt the temples.

His body appeared precipitated over the precipice.

He grasped at the projection, then at the rope, but missed both.

His bulk accelerated his fall.

His skull came in contact with an angle of the ice, which it at once shattered.

His burly frame dropped upon the bank at the same moment as his intended victim's reached it.

He gave a dying groan as Nick advanced.

Why does he advance?

Why does he kneel beside the body of Rotaldo?

Why does he place his hand in the Spaniard's breast.

It is to get the papers of which he had been dispossessed by the pirates.

Those that give life, riches, and liberty to Paul Jones.

CHAPTER XXXII.

ADRIFT NEAR THE RAPIDS

The raft Miamas had hastily constructed was found to answer well.

The current assisted the fugitives to proceed rapidly to the southward.

They hoped in a day or two to reach an island that lay in that direction.

Their object in seeking it was to reach a settlement there, whose people Miamas knew to be friendly disposed.

The first night Miamas saw the raft on shore in a small cove.

Refreshed by sleep and food, which the Indian had not forgotten to provide, they again made sail and prosecuted their voyage.

On the second day open water was reached, a gale from the north-west set in, and the raft was driven forward with fearful velocity.

Presently a cloud much darker and more descending than the others, which obscured the firmament, spread over the zenith, and based itself upon the horizon to leeward.

Borne on the resistless tide, the fugitives skim the surface of the waters with the swiftness of the eagle's flight.

The lightning commences to flash incessantly.

It is followed by a rolling and distant peal of thunder.

A deluge of slanting rain descended.

The blast roared, lulled, then roared again more fiercely.

The frail structure rocked to and fro in its impetuous course through the eddy.

While darkness became so intense, that the hand could scarcely be seen before the face.

In the gloomy moments, the wind suddenly burst upon the devoted raft.

It rose from a quarter directly opposite to that from which the gale had blown.

Four of the occupants were hurled into the water. While the other two, Miamas and Sumach, were carried further into a distant stream.

Here the Indian lost all control of the raft, for the concussion had deprived him of pole and rudder.

Paul Jones, bearing Emona, was the first to reach some neighbouring rocks.

He was followed by Nick and Zoe.

These rocks served as a rendezvous in the terrible emergency.

Awful as the forked flames were, when momentarily presented to sight, they were not so awful as the darkness and uncertainty that prevailed.

The transient blaze too soon revealed the terrible fate of the Indians, Sumach and Miamas.

An under current had swept the raft, upon which they were still standing into a mid stream, the boiling waters of which hurried them on with the speed of lightning itself.

They were at the mercy of the wind and wave without means to control either.

To add to their terror they were nearing a cataract, with a fall of more than four hundred feet.

Screams and shouts presently proclaimed that the wretched victims were unable to avoid the perilous descent.

The scene was agonising.

Sumach, with a yell of despair, fell on her knees.

Miamas, more frantic, prepared to dash into the seething flood.

He paused to regard his companion for the last time.

As he did so, they reached the brink of the falls, and were carried over.

The booming waters stifled their dying shrieks, and sounded their death-knell.

The effect of this catastrophe may be imagined, but can hardly be described.

Paul Jones and the other spectators, forgetting their own danger, were overcome.

Each covered the face, and remained for some time buried in grief.

For the first half hour that Paul Jones was on the desolate spot upon which he had taken refuge, his thoughts were unconnected, wild and vague.

His chance of escape seemed to grow fainter and fainter.

He once more fixed his eyes on the region around him.

He contemplated his companions, on whom terror had induced sleep.

Their present situation again turned his thoughts, and resolved him to take some measure for their sakes.

He wandered farther on the rock, and discovered an elevated part.

Here he again encountered a steep eminence, full seventy feet above high water mark, but only fifty in circumference.

It was on observing the eminence that a means of escape at once presented itself to the imagination of Paul Jones.

"A beacon lighted on the top," he exclaimed, "would surely attract the people of the island, from which we cannot be far distant."

The idea was put into execution as quickly as conceived.

The ascent Paul Jones was making was surrounded by many dangers and difficulties.

It was one which none but the best mountaineers could have attained.

The toppling crags whom a breath drew down seemed every moment to come, overwhelm or crush the climber.

He heard above and beneath frequent crashes, and conflicts of the disturbed rock-stone.

The boiling mist curls fast and white, and issues upward from the roused waters.

He is giddy, but mounts with caution.

His step proves fatal as he reaches the brink.

No, he clings fast to a friendly shrub, and stands upon the summit of the height.

Safely arrived at this point, Paul Jones lost no time in gathering fuel to serve his beacon.

He succeeded in this undertaking, but failed in another by a circumstance he had not calculated upon.

The water-soaked combustibles would not take light when it was applied to them.

It was in this extremity that a strange figure presented itself to the despairing and baffled mariner.

How he had appeared so mysteriously caused no surprise to Paul Jones, as he recognised in his companion the dreaded and redoubtable Flying Dutchman.

"What do you here?" said Paul Jones, after a pause of a moment to regain his breath.

The spectre skipper made no reply, but glided to the speaker's side.

At length he spoke in malignity.

"You may try hard, very hard to get out of my clutches, but you will fail to effect your purpose.

"We shall have a long cruise together," continued the Flying Dutchman, "and you will be further from it at the end than at the begining."

"Why do you thus persecute me?"

"You should demand the question of him who afforded food to the worm more than a century since," replied Vanderdecken.

"I bore with the unhappy offspring guilt had given life, but avenged myself on the seducer of my child by destroying generation after generation of his descendants.

"You are the last of the hellish brood, and must suffer for the crimes of thy ancestor."

"Wretched man," cried Paul Jones, "you must be more miserable even than I."

"I follow a destiny that cannot be averted.

"We are the agents of a mysterious power and must bend to it.

"Fate has made us deadly enemies.

"Although my enemy," said Paul Jones, "for the wrongs you have suffered from one of my family I am weak enough to forgive."

"Can you really forgive him who visits the sins of the guilty on the innocent?" asked the Flying Dutchman, upon whose lived countenance played a mournful smile as he uttered the words."

"I not only forgive, but pity," returned Paul Jones.

Enough," interrupted Vanderdecken, "the spell by which I am bound to wander over the face of the ocean is broken, my doom is cancelled, by my bitterest foe yeilding to the highest attribute of christianity.

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THE END.

"Go," he continued, presenting a small packet to Paul Jones; "the spirit of mercy has accomplished our destinies, and saved your soul and mine."

A flash of lightning passed, as Vanderdecken vanished from the presence of his late companion.

The latter was impressed by an intuitive feeling that he had seen the Flying Dutchman for the last time, and that his work was completed.

Gratitude, esteem and confidence at once reigned in his bosom.

He regarded the packet he had received, and opened it.

It contained the signals of his own ship.

He had now the means of raising the required beacon.

The combustible material was no sooner seen, than lighted by Paul Jones.

In a moment a tall pointed flame rose from a thick cloud of smoke.

A few minutes elapsed, and fire shot up on the high grounds of the afar-off island.

Promontory, jagged points, and woody eminence blazed an answer to the beacon, and indicated succour would arrive without delay.

We will not enter further into detail, but superficially observe the following incidents.

The boats of the friendly islanders succeeded in rescuing Paul Jones and his companions from their perilous positions.

The former, after some trifling adventure, was enabled at last to reach the treasure for which he had made so disastrous a voyage in the first instance.

He settled in America, and became, through the wealth he had discovered, one of its greatest benefactors.

During the latter years of the life of Paul Jones the war of independence broke out.

The adventurer sided with the country of his adoption.

He distinguished himself in naval engagements, but privately covering his name, otherwise illustrious with obliquity.

Some years after the events, with which this history concludes, an exploring expedition passed the boundary of the artic circle.

In their researches they came upon a wreck, which was recognised as that of the notorious Ell Malachor.

But six dead bodies were found on board her.

These appeared to have come hither to die in the place.

Each form stood like an icicle on the deck.

Figure, garment and hair, fleeced with drifting snow, looked soft, ay, even softer than carded wool.

The rigid limb, the stiff stark face and glassy eye, told too terribly the fate of the "Frozen Crew."

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